Howard County Health Department

Bureau of Population Health
Communicable Disease Program
8930 Stanford Blvd | Columbia, MD 21045
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Maura J. Rossman, M.D., Health Officer

COVID-19 (2019 Novel Coronavirus) Information and Guidance

School Nurse and Administrator Resources
Updated 2/12/20 at 4:00 pm

Background

As you may know, China is experiencing an expanding outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a new coronavirus (COVID-19). This virus emerged in Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The virus is spreading from person-to-person, and cases have been detected in a number of countries internationally and the United States.

At this time, the immediate risk to the general public in Maryland and the United States is considered to be low. There is no evidence that COVID-19 has spread to Howard County at this time.

As new information emerges, please remind your community that *the risk of novel coronavirus is not at all connected with race, ethnicity or nationality*. Stigma will not help to fight the illness. Sharing accurate information during a time of heightened concern is one of the best things we can do to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

For the most update information go to [CDC website](#).

What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. They usually cause mild respiratory illnesses such as the common cold. Some coronaviruses have caused more severe illness, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). 2019-nCoV is a new coronavirus that had not been seen in humans before December 2019.

Who is at risk for COVID-19?

At this time, most people in Maryland are not considered at risk for COVID-19 infection and do not need to seek medical evaluation for the virus.

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How is COVID-19 spread?

Most often, spread from person-to-person happens during close exposure to a person infected with COVID-19. Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, similar to how influenza viruses and other respiratory pathogens spread. These droplets can land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It is currently unclear if a person can get 2019-nCoV by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

Who should seek medical evaluation for COVID-19?

Students, staff, and volunteers who are:

- Ill with a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing AND have traveled from China in the last 14 days
  OR
- Ill with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing AND a close contact of a person known to have 2019-nCoV illness.

What should I do if I suspect a student, staff member, or volunteer may be ill with COVID-19?

If a student, staff member, or volunteer meets the above criteria, it is important to isolate them from others and ask them to wear a facemask. For questions specific to the COVID-19, contact Howard County Health Department Communicable Disease program at **410-313-6284** between the hours of 8:00a.m. and 5:30p.m. Monday - Friday. They will provide you with guidance.

Should all children returning from China stay home from school for 14 days?

CDC and US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are implementing enhanced health screenings to detect travelers with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing when entering the United States. Medical evaluation and care are being closely guided by CDC, Maryland Department of Health and Howard County Health Department.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention currently recommends that all asymptomatic travelers from China (including school students, staff and volunteers) arriving in the U.S. **AS OF** February 3, 2020 stay at home, away from others, and monitor their health for 14 days. Self-monitoring will be done with public health supervision. This measure is subject to change as new information becomes available.

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What can I do to prevent COVID-19 infections in my school?

Schools do not need to take any special precautions beyond what is normally recommended to prevent the spread of germs in schools. You can help students and staff reduce their risk for getting and spreading viral respiratory infections, including the flu and the common cold, by encouraging them to take simple steps which will also prevent COVID-19. These include:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home while sick and avoid close contact with others.
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash hands.
- Recommend annual flu vaccinations if not yet received. To schedule an appointment call Howard County Health Department at **410-313-7500**.

In addition, we recommend that schools be sure to follow their regular cleaning and disinfection program.

- Clean hard surfaces (desks, tables, countertops, sinks) daily. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (door handles, faucets, railings), bathrooms and health rooms at least once a day. Use alcohol wipes to clean keyboards.
- Use EPA approved disinfectants registered for influenza on hard surfaces.

Where can I turn for more information?

- [2019 Novel Coronavirus Information for Health Professionals](#) (CDC)
- [Flowchart to Identify and Assess 2019 Novel Coronavirus](#) (CDC)
- [MDH 2019 Novel Coronavirus](#)
- [MDH Communicable Diseases Summary For School Health Services](#)
- [HCHD 2019 NCoV Health Alert](#)
  We will continue to update this page.