

February 28, 2020

Dear School Community:

Re: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

I am writing to provide you with an update about the novel coronavirus: COVID-19. Toronto Public Health (TPH) continues to respond to the situation working with City of Toronto and health care partners.

What is the risk in Toronto?

The risk of getting COVID-19 in Toronto remains low because the virus is not spreading in the general community. Toronto Public Health has investigated a number of individuals who have contracted COVID-19 after travel in an affected area, or having close contact with an individual who had COVID-19. Globally, most people have gotten this virus through travel in affected areas or through close, household contact with someone who had the virus. Overall, most infections have resulted in mild illness.

Has anything changed?

The list of designated affected areas has been expanded beyond mainland China to include Hong Kong, Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, Iran and Italy.

What do these changes mean for school communities?

You may have travel plans in the near future, including over the March break. If you are planning to travel, please consult the [Government of Canada](http://www.gc.ca/govcanada) website for travel advice and advisories related to COVID-19. You should be aware that some countries have entry and exit restrictions. Incoming travellers to Toronto continue to receive information about COVID-19 at airports, including to:

- monitor themselves for respiratory symptoms, including fever, cough, and difficulty breathing;
- seek medical care immediately if these respiratory symptoms develop within 14 days after returning to Canada; and
- inform their healthcare provider or local public health department about symptoms and travel history before they seek medical care.

People who are travelling in the affected areas are advised that for 14 days after their last day in this region they should monitor their health for fever, cough or difficulty breathing, and avoid places where they cannot easily separate themselves from others if they become ill. Individuals who have signs and symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing

within 14 days of travelling in these areas will be asked to self-isolate and call their local public health department, which for Toronto is TPH.

How can I protect myself and my family from this virus?

We continue to advise members of the public to take the usual prevention measures to reduce the risk of transmission of the flu and respiratory illness, including:

- wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze;
- if you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm;
- get an annual flu vaccination, available from clinics and pharmacies; and
- stay home if you are ill.

These measures may seem simple, but they are powerful ways to protect yourself and others from getting sick.

How can I stay informed?

Toronto Public Health continues to carefully monitor this evolving situation, and regularly update our website with the latest, factual information at www.Toronto.ca/coronavirus. We encourage you to stay informed through regular review of credible information sources such as our website. If you have any questions, you can call TPH at 416-338-7600, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and on weekends from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Translation is available in many languages.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health