



Mason Elementary School

School Administrative Unit #89
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March 2, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope everyone had a wonderful February Vacation and got some time to have fun and relax. The NH Department of Education has been sending out information about the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) or COVID-19 as they are working closely with the CDC and sharing what they know with the schools.

As you know, there has been increasing concern globally regarding the recent outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) or COVID-19. While there are no suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Hampshire, we are going to be proactive in taking appropriate steps to prepare ourselves in the event of an issue.

As of today, in the US, there are only slightly over 70 cases confirmed. At the same time, the risk for the influenza virus is very high. It is important to note that residents are much more likely to become sick with a cold or the flu than to be exposed to COVID-19. Some have asked, "What are common symptoms of COVID-19 and how is it prevented or treated?"

According to our latest COVID-19 update from the State Department of Education, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms typically include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent infection with this virus, and there is no specific antiviral treatment recommended once infected. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

As with seasonal flu and strep infections, there are general precautions we can all take to remain as healthy as possible.

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. You can also cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

- Avoid sharing drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, dishes, towels, water bottles, or other items. Wash these items thoroughly with soap and water after use.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick whenever possible.
- Stay home from school and work until the sick individual has been fever free for at least 24 hours off any fever reducing medication, or signs of a fever (i.e., chills, feeling warm, flushed appearance), respiratory symptoms are improving, and they are feeling better.
- Practice other good health habits: Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill.
- Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces within your home.

It is important to keep children home from school when they are ill. If your child has any of the following symptoms please keep them home from school: temperature greater than 100.4, coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, any rash not yet diagnosed by a physician, red or pink itchy eye, and/or drainage from eye, and any contagious illness such as strep throat or flu. Please report your child's absence to the school office.

We want to let you know that we are following our regular protocols for respiratory illnesses and we are working closely with state officials. The Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) has provided guidance for school districts that we are following carefully.

In addition, you can expect the following actions from our school system in the short-term:

- We will be instructing our school nurse to remain vigilant at sending students home who present with respiratory issues or a fever;
- We will be focusing our custodial efforts on cleaning commonly used surfaces (such as desks, door handles, etc.) on a daily basis;
- We are in constant coordination with local, State, and Federal agencies, as needed; and,
- We will continue communication with you about any local developments or changes to our protocols.

For the most up to date information about this situation, you can visit the Center for Disease Control's website at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

The World Health Organization's website at:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>, or

The NH DHHS website at <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/2019-ncov.htm>.

While this is a public health concern, the CDC continues to report that the immediate risk to the general public remains low at this time. Yet, in today's connected world, the potential for infectious disease is always of concern.

The Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is an evolving situation that we are following closely and will continue to update you as information is shared with us. Please rest assured that we are monitoring student health concerns.

According to the health department, people who have returned from mainland China are being monitored by public health authorities and must stay home for 14 days after their travel. People who have returned from other locations with travel notices for COVID-19 may continue to attend work and school. Travelers that develop symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, or shortness of breath), should:

- Take their temperature with a thermometer.
- Stay home and avoid close contact with other people.
- Seek health advice by phone from either a healthcare provider or the NH Division of Public Health Services at 603-271-4496 (after-hours: 603-271-5300).
- Before going to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell the provider or office about recent travel and symptoms.
- Practice strict respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene including covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- If available, wear a surgical mask when traveling outside of the home (e.g. to a doctor's office)

Two resources that may be helpful in talking to children about COVID-19 are listed below:

- <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4886.pdf>
- <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>

We will continue to monitor the situation and we will share new information with you as it comes to us. If you have any questions, please contact Nurse Carrier dcarrier@sau89.org or myself, Kristen Kivela kkivela@sau89.org.

Sincerely,

Kristen