

Date: January 30, 2020

Title: Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Update

The B.C. Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, announced on January 28 that the first case of novel coronavirus has been confirmed in B.C. This was communicated out to school districts and independent schools in a special edition of the Deputy Minister's Bulletin sent on [January 28](#).

The Ministry of Education understands that school district and independent school staff, students and communities may have questions about coronavirus. Please know that the Ministry is in regular communication with the Ministry of Health and provincial and local health authorities to make public health decisions, and to ensure students and school/district staff are kept informed and safe. The Ministry will continue to be in close contact with public health officials and, with that in mind, would ask you to ensure that no assumptions are made about the risk of students or staff based on their ethnicity or travel history.

Misinformation regarding coronavirus is starting to circulate on social media. We encourage students, staff and their families to refer to official sources. In B.C., the latest official updates are located on the [BC Centre for Disease Control website](#).

As well, a new toll-free phone number (1-833-784-4397) has been established to answer questions from Canadians about the 2019 novel coronavirus. Service is available from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. EST until January 29 and from 7 a.m. to midnight EST starting January 30.

Reducing the Risk

The BC Centre for Disease Control recommends that to reduce the risk of exposure to novel coronavirus, individuals employ the same measures that are taken in relation to colds and flu:

- Wash one's hands frequently for at least 20 seconds using soap and hot water (it is the single most effective way of reducing the spread of infection).
- Practice other good hygiene habits: do not touch one's face/eyes/mouth with one's hands and cover one's mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing (ideally with a disposable tissue or the crease of the elbow).
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched workspace surfaces.
- Maintain good general health (eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, exercise in moderation).
- Stay home if sick.

Advice for Students and Families Considering Travel

Students and families considering travel to and from China are encouraged to consult the [Novel Coronavirus in China Travel Health Notice](#) on the [Government of Canada Travel and Tourism page](#) regularly, as recommendations may change over the course of your travel as new information becomes available.

No matter where students and families plan to travel, the Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that they consult [Government of Canada Travel and Tourism page](#), as this is the Government of Canada's official source of destination-specific travel information. This web page provides important advice to help travelers make informed decisions and travel safely while abroad.

Students and their families should always tell their health care providers about their travel history if they become ill after returning to Canada.
