



February 28, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The health of our students, staff, families and community is extremely important to us. We wanted to provide you with an update regarding the precautions that are being taken to decrease the spread of acute respiratory illnesses.

As you may know, the 2019-20 flu season has been complicated by the arrival of Coronavirus or COVID-19. At this time, no cases of COVID-19 (2019 Novel Coronavirus) have been identified in St. Louis County or Missouri. However, the District continues to monitor this situation and to work under the guidance of the St. Louis County Department of Public Health, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

COVID-19 is a new respiratory virus that was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. It is most commonly spread (like other viruses) through the air by coughing and sneezing; close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands; touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands; and rarely by fecal contamination. The CDC believes the symptoms of COVID-19 appear between 2 and 14 days after exposure and include fever, cough and shortness of breath.

Risk of contracting COVID-19 is based on exposure. And when a new disease is circulating, it's natural for people to ask what they can do to protect themselves and their families. At this time, the guidance provided is to take the same precautions recommended during flu season:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others.

*Special School District*

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Mission: In collaboration with partner districts we provide technical education and a wide variety of individualized educational and support services designed for each student's successful contribution to our community. Vision: Partners for each student's success.

Values: student success • collaboration • integrity • stewardship • continuous improvement • equity • accountability

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.
- Do not send your child back to school following an illness until symptom- and fever-free (100F or greater) for at least 24 hours without the use of fever- or symptom-reducing medications.
- Get your flu shot.

The District implements the following strategies to decrease the spread of illness:

- Routinely cleans all frequently touched surfaces in schools and on buses.
- Provides disposable wipes so commonly used surfaces can be wiped down before use.
- Provides alcohol-based hand rubs.
- Advises employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness to stay home and not return until free of fever (100F or greater), any signs of a fever, or any other symptoms for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing or other symptoms-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).

While the immediate risk of this new virus to the American public is believed to be low at this time, everyone can do their part to help keep our students, staff, families and community healthy. Thank you for doing your part!

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)



## What is novel coronavirus?

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus strain that has only spread in people since December 2019. Health experts are concerned because little is known about this new virus and it has the potential to cause severe illness and pneumonia in some people.

## How does novel coronavirus spread?

Health experts are still learning the details about how this new coronavirus spreads. Other coronaviruses spread from an infected person to others through:

- the air by coughing and sneezing
- close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes
- in rare cases, contact with feces

## How severe is novel coronavirus?

Experts are still learning about the range of illness from novel coronavirus. Reported cases have ranged from mild illness (similar to a common cold) to severe pneumonia that requires hospitalization. So far, deaths have been reported mainly in older adults who had other health conditions.

## What are the symptoms?

People who have been diagnosed with novel coronavirus have reported symptoms that may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus:

Fever



Cough



Difficulty breathing



## Who is at risk for novel coronavirus?

Currently the risk to the general public is low. At this time, there are a small number of individual cases in the U.S. To minimize the risk of spread, health officials are working with healthcare providers to promptly identify and evaluate any suspected cases.

Travelers to and from certain areas of the world may be at increased risk. See [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel) for the latest travel guidance from the CDC.

## How can I prevent from getting novel coronavirus?

If you are traveling overseas (to China but also to other places) follow the CDC's guidance: [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel).

Right now, the novel coronavirus has not been spreading widely in the United States, so there are no additional precautions recommended for the general public. Steps you can take to prevent spread of flu and the common cold will also help prevent coronavirus:

- wash hands often with soap and water. If not available, use hand sanitizer.
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others
- cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing



Currently, there are no vaccines available to prevent novel coronavirus infections.

## How is novel coronavirus treated?

There are no medications specifically approved for coronavirus. Most people with mild coronavirus illness will recover on their own by drinking plenty of fluids, resting, and taking pain and fever medications. However, some cases develop pneumonia and require medical care or hospitalization.

**For more information:** [www.health.mo.gov/coronavirus](http://www.health.mo.gov/coronavirus)

Updated 1/24/2020

