

March 10, 2020	School Board Update	COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)	A. Lynn Noseworthy Medical Officer of Health
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**RE: Update on the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

The Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPR) is providing school families with an update on the COVID-19 situation. Although the risk of becoming ill from COVID-19 remains low in Ontario, the local Health Unit continues to work closely with provincial and federal governments and its community health partners (e.g. hospitals, health care providers, school boards) to ensure a coordinated response and to prepare should a case develop locally.

**COVID-19 Plan** - Just as families prepare a home safety plan for fire, being prepared for COVID-19 is no different. The Health Unit recommends families start creating a household plan in the event a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in the community. **We all have a role in preventing the spread of respiratory viruses.**

- **Talk with the people who need to be included in your plan** – household members, relatives, and friends to determine the needs of each person.
- **Practise everyday prevention actions to reduce your risk of respiratory illnesses:**
  - Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
  - Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose as much as possible;
  - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands;
  - If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm;
  - Stay home if you or a family member are ill;
  - Choose a room in the home that can be used to separate sick household members from those who are healthy;
  - Regularly clean and disinfect (common disinfectant product) objects and high-touch surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, fridge/cabinet handles, countertops, light switches);
  - Get your flu shot to protect you from the flu;
  - If you are ill and must visit a healthcare provider, clinic, or hospital emergency department, call ahead or tell them right away when you arrive that you have a respiratory illness and wear a mask while waiting to be seen; and
  - Avoid visiting people in hospitals or long-term care homes if you are sick.
- **Plan ways to care for those family members who might be at greater risk for serious complications** - consult with your health care provider for more information about monitoring the health of family members (i.e. elderly, those who have weak immune system) for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.

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- **Create an emergency contact list** – ensure your household has a current list of emergency contacts for family, friends, neighbors, carpool drivers, health care providers, teachers, employers, the local public health unit, and other community resources.
- **Stay connected with your child’s school, childcare facility and your workplace** – stay up-to-date on information by reviewing websites, learn about your employer’s emergency operations plans, and review sick leave policies.

### **March Break and Travel**

The Ministry of Health has expanded the list of impacted areas beyond mainland China to include **South Korea, Hong Kong, Italy, Singapore, Iran and Japan**. The Government of Canada has issued COVID-19 travel health advisories for each of these areas.

If you are planning to travel, please refer to the [Government of Canada](#) website for travel advice and advisories related to COVID-19. If you have recently returned from a trip out of country, please follow the below steps:

#### **Any International Travel**

Upon return all travellers are advised to:

- Monitor their health for flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, and difficulty breathing) for 14 days upon return; and
- If flu-like symptoms develop, contact HKPR District Health Unit at 1-866-888-4577, ext. 5020

#### **Travel to Hubei Province in China, Iran or Italy**

If you or your family have returned from Hubei province in China, Iran or Italy in the last 14 days:

- Stay at home and avoid close contact with others, including those in your home, for 14 days after leaving the impacted area AND contact the HKPR District Health Unit for further instructions and important information – 1-866-888-4577, ext. 5020;
- If you notice flu-like symptoms (fever, cough and difficulty breathing), contact HKPR District Health Unit immediately.

### **Ignore Social Media Rumours**

Follow credible health organizations for reliable COVID-19 information to discuss with family members and stay current about the situation to protect your health.

[Health Canada](#)

[Ministry of Health](#)

[Public Health Agency of Canada:](#)

If you have questions or concerns on COVID-19, please call the Health Unit at 1-866-888-4577, ext. 5020, or visit [www.hkpr.on.ca](http://www.hkpr.on.ca). After hours, people can call Telehealth Ontario for medical advice toll-free at 1-866-797-0000.