

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Information on the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) for K-12 Schools

February 6, 2020

The State of Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is providing Q&A information below for Connecticut schools in response to the quickly evolving novel (new) coronavirus, (named “2019-nCoV”) that was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, and continues to expand internationally.

In our efforts to bring schools and communities the latest information, DPH and local health departments and districts are participating in weekly national conference calls with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and are also holding weekly state conference calls to exchange information impacting the state and local communities.

Education is vital in our efforts to reduce the spread of this and any illness. Outbreaks involving novel coronaviruses evolve quickly and recommendations from public health officials may change frequently as new information becomes available. Please check the following websites often for updates:

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

DPH: <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Public-Health-Preparedness/Main-Page/2019-Novel-Coronavirus>

This guidance is based on the [Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential 2019-nCoV Exposure in Travel-Associated or Community Settings](#) issued by the CDC on February 3, 2020 and updated on February 5, 2020. It applies to people who returned to the United States on or after February 3, 2020 and spent time in mainland China during the 14 days before they arrived in the United States.



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2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) for K-12 Schools Q & A

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1. **What are Coronaviruses?** Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that commonly circulate throughout the world, including here in Connecticut. They cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more serious illnesses requiring hospitalization.
2. **How serious is this virus and what are the range of symptoms?** Reported illnesses due to infection with 2019-nCoV have ranged from mild to severe. Symptoms have included fever, cough and shortness of breath. While many patients have had mild illnesses, some patients have been hospitalized and deaths have been reported in other countries.
3. **How does this virus spread?** Current information suggests that person-to-person spread is occurring, although it is not clear how easily the virus spreads between people. The United States reported the first confirmed instance of person-to-person spread with this virus on January 30, 2020.
4. **What is the incubation period for this virus?** The CDC believes at this time that symptoms of 2019-nCoV may appear between 2 and 14 days after exposure. This estimated range is based on the incubation period of previously studied coronaviruses.
5. **Should all persons returning from China with cold or flu-like symptoms be tested for 2019-nCoV infection?** Laboratory testing for 2019-nCoV infection will only be done when an ill traveler meets ALL of the CDC criteria for of Persons Under Investigation (PUI) for 2019-nCoV: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/clinical-criteria.html>.
6. **What happens when people who have been in China return to the United States by air travel?** All people who spent time in mainland China within 14 days before arriving in the United States land at one of eleven airports in the US (Bradley International Airport is not one of these airports). In the airport they are asked questions about their travel and whether they have been in contact with anyone with 2019-nCoV. They also have their temperature taken and are asked about their health. People who have been in Hubei Province, China, or are sick, are not allowed to continue to their final destinations. If they have not been in Hubei Province and have no symptoms, they are given information about self-monitoring and they are allowed to continue to their final destinations. For those who arrived on or after February 3, 2020, the health department at their destination is notified and will contact them to discuss self-monitoring and other recommendations.
7. **What should people who have returned from China do?** In the guidance issued on February 3, 2020, people who arrived in the United States on or after February 3, 2020 and spent time in mainland China within the previous 14 days are recommended to:
 - a. Self-monitor their temperature and symptoms for 14 days after they left China. This means they should take their temperature twice a day and watch for cough or having difficulty breathing.

- b. The 14-day self-monitoring period begins the day they left mainland China, even if they spent time in another country between leaving China and arriving in the United States.
 - c. Practice social isolation. Social isolation is defined as staying home and remaining out of public places. It is recommended they not go to schools or to their workplaces.
 - d. The local health department will contact these people to provide recommendations, monitor their health, and help them get medical care if they become ill.
- 8. Who does this guidance apply to?** This guidance applies **only** to people who returned to the United States on or after February 3, 2020 and spent time in mainland China in the previous 14 days.
- 9. What about people who arrived in the United States before February 3, 2020?** Travelers from China who arrived in the United States before February 3, 2020 should be allowed to complete their 14 days of self-monitoring based on the instructions they received when they were screened on arrival by federal public health officials. This included a coronavirus risk assessment before they were allowed to travel to their final destination in Connecticut. For example, today is February 6, so this would apply to travelers who arrived in the United States on or after January 23, 2020 but before February 3, 2020
- 10. What about families of people who have been in China?** There is no public health reason to exclude family members of people with no symptoms who were in China in the previous 14 days. Family members who were not in China should continue to stay in school or go to work if the person who traveled to China has no symptoms.
- 11. What can schools do at this time?** Stay informed, listen to public health messages, and implement good public health practices to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. Avoid stigmatizing people who have recently traveled to China. Contact your local health department if you have questions about exclusion of students or staff who have traveled or their family members, or if someone self-reports travel or illness. To locate the appropriate contact for your school's local health department or district, you may use the following link: <https://portal.ct.gov/dph/Local-Health-Admin/LHA/Local-Health-Administration---Site-Map>
- 12. Do people who have been to China get cleared to return to work or school?** People with a travel history to China and no symptoms can return to work or school after the 14-day self-monitoring period is complete. There is no clearance process. People without symptoms are not tested for the virus.
- 13. What should a school do if a student, teacher, or staff member who was in China during the past 14 days becomes ill?**

If a person travelled to China in the last 14 days and becomes sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing they should:

 - a. Be separated from other students or staff until they can be picked up for transport home or to a medical provider. Consider having the ill person wear a face mask.

- b. Seek medical care at an emergency department. Before going to the emergency room, the school or family should call ahead and tell them about recent travel and symptoms.
- c. Stay home while they are sick except to seek medical care.
- d. Use a tissue or sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing and dispose of tissues in lined trash cans.
- e. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- f. School staff should clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces according to product directions and their facility's policy.

14. What steps can a school take to prevent respiratory viruses from infecting students and teachers? The same steps which prevent other respiratory viruses, including influenza, from spreading can also prevent 2019-nCoV from spreading. Connecticut is currently near the peak of influenza season. DPH recommends schools consider the following to prevent the spread of influenza and other respiratory viruses:

- a. Adhere to existing school health protocols for any staff/student(s) presenting as ill or any staff/student(s) who may have been exposed to a contagious disease. Follow established exclusion recommendations for acute respiratory illness (patients should be fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medications before returning to school.)
- b. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- c. Provide adequate soap, paper towels and other cleaning supplies in bathrooms and other wash areas.
- d. Avoid close contact with people who are sick and encourage families to keep ill students at home.
- e. Remind students to cover their mouths and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- f. Have custodial staff clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces according to product directions and their facility's policy.
- g. Strongly promote the annual flu shot for all students and staff.

15. Should planned field trips or other travel to China be canceled? Please see the CDC website for up-to-date advice regarding travel to China:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/warning/novel-coronavirus-china>

16. What testing is available for 2019-nCoV? At this time only CDC can test for 2019-nCoV and testing must be approved by DPH and CDC after discussing the patient with the medical provider. If a medical provider suspects a patient might meet the criteria for a Person Under Investigation (PUI) and should be considered for testing, they should call DPH at 860-509-7995 (days) or 860-509-8000 (evenings, weekends, holidays). Testing will be available at the DPH State Public Health Laboratory soon. DPH will still approve all testing.