

March 12, 2020

Dear School Community Members:

Re: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update and Travel Over March Break

As the March break travel approaches, I would like to provide some answers for some frequently asked questions I have received about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

What has changed?

- Individuals who have travelled in **Italy** within the last 14 days, please self-isolate and contact Toronto Public Health (TPH) within 24 hours of arriving in Toronto.
- On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic due to the spread and severity of the outbreak in some areas of the world. TPH continues to actively monitor the situation, and work with our municipal and health partners to plan for the potential of local spread.

What is the current advice for families travelling over the March break?

- Regardless of where you plan to travel, consult travel.gc.ca, the source of Government of Canada-specific travel information. It provides advice to help travellers make informed decisions and travel safely while abroad.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada is now recommending that Canadians avoid all cruise ship travel due to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.
- If you travel anywhere outside Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada asks that you monitor your health for 14 days after you return home as you may have come into contact with COVID-19. If you develop fever, cough and difficulty breathing within 14 days of travel, even mild symptoms, self-isolate, avoid contact with others and call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 for further instructions.
- For those who have travelled in Hubei Province, China, Italy or Iran within the last 14 days or have had close contact with a person who has contracted COVID-19, please self-isolate and contact TPH within 24 hours of arriving in Toronto. Information about self-isolation is available on our website at www.toronto.ca/coronavirus.

How can I help my family deal with their concerns about COVID-19?

Children may have concerns related to COVID-19. Some ways to support your child include:

- validate and listen to your child, and reassure them with information on how to reduce their risk, as noted above;
- be a calm and supportive role model for your children as this will help them cope better;
- remember children are often listening when you talk to others about COVID-19 so be mindful of what you are saying;

- pay attention to media exposure as too much or misinformed sources of media coverage can increase perceptions of risk, fear and anxiety; and
- the World Health Organization has created a [resource](#) that may help children cope with stress related to COVID-19.

How can I protect myself and my family from this virus?

We continue to advise members of the public to take the usual prevention measures to reduce the risk of respiratory illness such as COVID-19, including:

- wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze;
- if you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm;
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands;
- avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces; and
- stay home if you are ill.

Do people who have come into contact with someone who does not have COVID-19, but who was exposed to someone with COVID-19 need to take any precautions?

If you are in close contact with someone who does not have COVID-19, but who was exposed to someone with COVID-19, you do not need to take any precautions. It is recommended that you continue with your regular routines and activities, including regular hand washing and respiratory hygiene.

What are other things that I can do for this situation?

One of the most important things you can do to prepare for a safe March break is to stay informed. Toronto Public Health continues to carefully monitor this evolving situation, and we regularly update our website with the latest, factual information at www.Toronto.ca/coronavirus. If you have any questions, please call TPH at 416-338-7600, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and on weekends from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Translation is available in many languages.

I would like to wish you and your family a safe and healthy March break. I will continue to provide you with further updates about COVID-19 as new information is confirmed.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health