



Comox Valley Schools

A Community of Learners

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Comox Valley Schools
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Office of the Superintendent of Schools

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Communicating about the Coronavirus

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The [Ministry of Education](#) and the Ministry of Health have released a joint press statement January 31 regarding updates on the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

Comox Valley Schools in consultation with Island Health Authority has developed a number of key messages to help schools address to parents and families matters and concerns related to the coronavirus outbreak and to understand the current risk it poses to our school communities.

The Director of Health and Safety has also advised our school communities to continue to practice the standard protocols of cleanliness during flu season and to encourage families to keep children home if they are ill.

Key messages

- [Island Health](#), the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\)](#) and provincial and federal authorities are closely monitoring the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) from China.
- The risk of spread of this virus within British Columbia remains low at this time.
- All necessary precautions are being taken to prevent the spread of infection.
- Travelers arriving in Canada from affected areas are being assessed at the point of entry.
- Island Health and the province are prepared to quickly and accurately detect and respond to serious infectious diseases.
- It is not necessary for the general public to take special precautions beyond the usual measures recommended to prevent other common respiratory viruses. Regular handwashing, coughing or sneezing into your elbow sleeve, disposing of tissues appropriately and avoiding contact with sick people are important ways to prevent the spread of respiratory illness generally.
- In our school district (SD 71) we have not had any new students arrive from China for the International Student Program (ISP) since the outbreak.

Additional messages for schools and students

- There is no need to restrict any activities for international students or to cancel any mass school events or field trips to public spaces or events.

- Anyone who is concerned they may have been exposed to, or are experiencing symptoms of, the coronavirus should contact their primary care provider, local public health unit or call 8-1-1 ([HealthLink BC](#)).
- Students who become ill following international travel can call 8-1-1 or see a health care provider.
- Staff and students are encouraged to stay home if they are feeling ill.
- Daily updates can be found online on the BCCDC website:
<http://www.bccdc.ca/about/news-stories/stories/2020/information-on-novel-coronavirus>
- For travel recommendations, see <http://www.travel.gc.ca/>
- Visit the WHO webpage for international information:
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

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).
- 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. until January 29 and from 7 a.m. to midnight starting January 30 (Eastern Standard Time).

Tom Demeo
 Superintendent of Schools
 School District #71 (Comox Valley)