

COVID-19 Update

(coronavirus)



Avon Maitland
District School Board
Engage, Inspire, Innovate... Always Learning

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Information for Families

Dear AMDSB Families,

Student and staff safety is our main priority. The COVID-19 (Coronavirus) situation continues to evolve and we understand that many families may be travelling during the March Break. We have been collaborating with our local Health Unit (Huron Perth Public Health) to provide the following information and recommendations.

About COVID-19

- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory infections like bronchitis, pneumonia or severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)
- Coronaviruses are spread mainly from person to person through close contact, when a person coughs or sneezes
- Some human coronaviruses spread easily between people, while others do not
- The symptoms of COVID-19, are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold. They include cough, sneezing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing
- Your risk of severe disease may be higher if you have a weakened immune system. This may be the case for older people, people with chronic disease (for example, diabetes, cancer, heart, renal or chronic lung disease)
- According to Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH), as of March 5, 2020, the risk in Ontario for the human-to-human spread of COVID-19 is still considered low. The confirmed cases in Ontario were all associated with travel to affected areas
- Globally, the following geographic areas are identified as affected areas: China (mainland), Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea
- It is prudent that we prepare for the possibility that the virus could spread further as we have already seen a local case in Waterloo region (travel-related)
- Although the infection can be life-threatening, most people who have been infected with COVID-19 have not been severely ill.

Role of Public Health

- HPPH is continuing to work with local partners and stakeholders to monitor, respond and plan for the possible presence of COVID-19 in Huron and Perth counties, in alignment with provincial and Canadian planning
- HPPH has an Emergency Response Plan. Activities include: communications, surveillance, public health case management (such as assisting with self-isolation) and contact tracing, acting as liaison with the Ontario Health Regional Planning Table and facilitating regional plans
- So far, there is no evidence of community transmission of COVID-19 in Canada so public events (mass gatherings) can still happen. If there is evidence of community transmission, efforts would be aggressive to contain and stop the spread of the virus in that location. If the recommendations for our community were to change, HPPH will be sure to update our partners and stakeholders right away
- At present the Public Health Agency of Canada, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Huron Perth Public Health do not recommend school closure strategies for the prevention of COVID-19.

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Recommendations for individuals

- HPPH recommends that individuals consider how to prepare for a time when we might have more respiratory viruses in our community. Planning may include:
 - Thinking of options for childcare or personal support if you, your partner or family members are sick with a viral illness
 - Refilling prescription medications and stocking up on non-perishable food
 - Protect yourself from currently circulating respiratory illnesses by doing the following:
 - wash your hands often with soap and water
 - cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue. If one isn't handy, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands
 - avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
 - avoid contact with people who are sick
 - clean and disinfect surfaces often with regular household cleaners
 - stay home if you are sick and do not visit hospitals, long-term care or retirement homes if you are ill.

Travel recommendations

- March break is coming up. If students and their families are planning to travel or returning from travel, the current recommendations are:
 - Check the [Public Health Agency of Canada – Travel Health Notices](#) webpage before you go for the latest advisories
 - Be aware that the situation may change while you are away and you may get stranded where you are, or you may be required to self isolate at home upon your return
 - It is always good practice to [monitor your health](#) after you return from travelling
 - If you become sick, inform your healthcare provider of your travel history
 - Take [regular infection control measures](#) while you are travelling to prevent getting sick

What AMDSB schools are doing

- Schools are encouraging staff and students to do the following:
 - Those who are ill with fever and/or infectious respiratory symptoms are asked to stay home
 - Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth
 - Practice good respiratory etiquette – cough or sneeze into a tissue or flexed elbow and dispose of used tissues
 - Practice hand hygiene – wash hands with plain soap and water
- Schools are also:
 - Ensuring all handwashing sinks are well-stocked with hand washing supplies
 - Ensuring regular and routine cleaning and disinfecting of the facility, especially high-touch surfaces and objects (e.g. door knobs, electronic devices, toys)
 - Increasing disinfection practices when appropriate and spaces are available for extra cleaning
 - Continuing to report to HPPH any case of a student/child ill with a Disease of Public Health Significance, and increased school absenteeism rates (> 10%).

AMDSB staff will continue to monitor the situation and should recommendations change, we will let families know as soon as possible.

For more information

Please refer to credible sources for information on COVID-19:

- Public Health Agency of Canada: www.canada.ca/coronavirus
- Ontario Ministry of Health: www.ontario.ca/coronavirus
- Huron Perth Public Health: www.hpph.ca/coronavirus. Call Health Line at 1-888-221-2133 ext 3267, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)

Sincerely,



Dr. Lisa Walsh, Director of Education, Avon Maitland District School Board