

Memo for Schools

From the office of the Medical Officer of Health

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Date: January 27, 2020

Overview of the novel Coronavirus

As has been reported extensively in the news, Chinese health authorities have identified a novel coronavirus (referred to as 2019-nCoV) as being responsible for a respiratory outbreak, with most cases linked to the city of Wuhan, China. The situation is rapidly evolving so the numbers will change daily. Isolated cases of confirmed 2019-nCoV respiratory illness have been reported in several countries including the United States.

It is important to remember that there are a number of common respiratory viruses currently circulating in Alberta and globally, such as influenza. The most likely cause of a respiratory infection in either a staff member or a student will be one of these viruses.

There are two presumptive cases of travel-related nCoV in Ontario. Both cases recently returned from Wuhan, China, and are connected. The overall risk to Albertans is considered by medical experts to remain low.

As this is an evolving situation, further updates can be found on the AH and AHS websites at:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx>

<https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>

What you should know:

- Health authorities in China and around the world have taken a comprehensive range of prevention and control measures and are continuing to investigate the suspected source of exposure, while isolating cases and tracking close contacts to prevent spread.
- There have been no reports of any cases involving Canadians overseas.
- AHS is carefully monitoring the situation and will be able to respond effectively should there be any cases in Alberta. This would include necessary follow up and notifications to anyone deemed to be at risk from contact with a confirmed case.

What you should do:

- If you know individuals with specific concerns related to potential exposures or related symptoms, please advise them to call Health Link- 811 for assessment and health advice.
- Schools should continue to follow current processes for monitoring and reporting of unusual cases of illness and clusters of illness using their established Zone Public Health contacts.
- Regular hand washing and respiratory etiquette (covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing) will protect staff and students from spreading respiratory viruses.
- You can visit the Public Health Agency of Canada website and the additional resources below for more information related to the illness and outbreak.

Additional References:

- <https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>
- Public Health Agency of Canada update on Pneumonia of Unknown Cause in China
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>
- WHO <https://www.who.int/csr/don/12-january-2020-novel-coronavirus-china/en/>