



2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Update for Chester County Schools

With recent cases of 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) reported in several countries including the U.S., the Chester County Health Department is increasing monitoring efforts to identify potential cases. The Health Department has posted information on its website: <https://www.chesco.org/4376/2019-Novel-Coronavirus> and is issuing this statement to provide details about its activities related to the outbreak.

While the available information suggests a low immediate health risk for the general public, we consider any new infectious disease a serious concern and are working with health care providers to promptly identify and evaluate any suspected cases. It is important to recognize that the current investigation and response are dynamic, and new information about the disease may impact the approach to this disease. The Health Department will keep you updated as the situation evolves.

Here is what you need to know about 2019-nCoV for your school:

Currently the risk to the general public is considered low. At this time, there are a small number of individual cases in the U.S. and no cases in Pennsylvania, though we are aware that could change at any time. Risk is based on exposure. As you know we are in the heart of flu and respiratory disease season, and with over two-thousand cases statewide, most of the population is at greater risk of contracting seasonal influenza than coronavirus. Staff or students with recent travel to any area of China, or contact with someone who has recent travel and is ill, have an increased risk for becoming ill. The Chester County Health Department is not recommending exclusion from work/ school of asymptomatic persons arriving from China.

For staff and students without an associated travel risk, it should not be assumed that most respiratory illnesses are the 2019 novel coronavirus. Symptoms of coronavirus are most similar to lower respiratory infections with patients having fever, cough, and shortness of breath. While in some cases illnesses can be severe and require hospitalization, many individuals infected with coronavirus recover by resting, drinking plenty of liquids, and taking pain and fever-reducing medications.

Staff and students should stay home when they are sick. Ill students who report symptoms during the school day consistent with coronavirus and have associated travel risk or contact with someone who does, should be asked to wear a surgical mask as soon as they are identified and be evaluated in a private room (three walls and a door) with the door closed. Healthcare personnel entering the room should use standard precautions, contact precautions, airborne precautions, and use eye protection (e.g., goggles or a face shield). Please note that these recommendations may change as the outbreak response continues. Any staff with questions can call the Chester County Health Department at (610) 344-6452.

When a new disease is circulating, it's natural for people to ask what they can do to protect themselves and their families. The best guidance at this point is to advise staff, students and your community to take the same precautions recommended for avoiding colds and flu:

- stay home when they are sick;
- teach students to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues, or to cough or sneeze into their inner elbow;
- practice good hand washing with soap and water as often as possible, and if soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers;
- encourage flu vaccination among both staff and students;
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces including classrooms.

Other faculty or parents who have concerns about their, or their families' personal exposure risks should contact their health care provider.

The Chester County Health Department is participating in federal and state meetings to regarding the outbreak to ensure a constant flow of communication. We are sharing the most current, verified updates to help the public understand what this virus is and what they can do to protect themselves.

Please visit the Health Department website for more information at:
<https://www.chesco.org/4376/2019-Novel-Coronavirus>.

Please distribute as appropriate.