



MESSAGE TO PARENTS – 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you have probably heard in the media, earlier this month a novel (new) coronavirus was identified as the cause of an outbreak of pneumonia, originating in Wuhan, China. This virus is now known as the *2019 Novel Coronavirus* or *2019-nCoV*.

The outbreak of this virus has been evolving rapidly; however most cases are in China with some cases reported in other countries including Thailand, Japan, South Korea, UK, USA and Canada. The two confirmed cases in Canada are in Toronto, Ontario. Both individuals had recently travelled to Wuhan, China where this virus originated and are currently in isolation.

It is important to note that **there are no reported cases in Halton Region**. At this time, **the Public Health Agency of Canada has assessed the public health risk associated with this new Coronavirus as low for Canada**.

I am writing to you today to share information on the symptoms and prevention of respiratory viruses including the new Coronavirus.

What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that commonly cause mild to moderate respiratory symptoms in humans. Most people with common human coronavirus illness (i.e. the common cold) will recover on their own.

However, some coronaviruses have been known to cause severe illness. Some human coronaviruses spread easily between people, while others do not. It is not yet fully understood how easily the 2019-nCoV spreads between people, but person-to-person spread has been limited to date.

What Are the Symptoms of 2019-nCoV?

Symptoms of 2019-nCoV infection include: **fever, cough, and breathing difficulties**, very similar to influenza (flu) symptoms.

The risk of severe disease may be higher in the elderly and in people with weakened immune systems.

If you or a household member has traveled to Wuhan, China recently and have developed these symptoms, you should avoid contact with others and call Halton Region Public Health at 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866. Anyone with severe illness should seek immediate medical attention.

How to Prevent the Spread of Respiratory Viruses Such as 2019-nCoV

To help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses including the 2019-nCoV, we recommend the following:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing;
- If you do not have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm;
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces regularly; and
- If you or your family members are ill, stay home

More Information

Additional information about the 2019-nCoV is available on the following websites:

- Public Health Agency of Canada - <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>
- Ontario Ministry of Health - www.ontario.ca/coronavirus

Halton Region Public Health is continuing to work closely with the Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario and local health care providers to monitor this situation and take actions, as appropriate. For further public health inquiries, please contact 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866.

The health and well-being of our community remains our highest priority. We will continue to keep you updated as new information becomes available.

Dr. Hamidah Meghani
Medical Officer of Health, Halton Region

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