

2019 Novel Coronavirus - Information for Child Care and Preschools **Updated February 6, 2020**

Background

As you may know, China is experiencing an expanding outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a new coronavirus (2019-nCoV). This virus emerged in Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The virus is spreading from person-to-person, and cases have been detected in a number of countries internationally and the United States.

At this time, the immediate risk to the general public in Washington and the United States is considered to be low. There is no evidence that 2019-nCoV is spreading in Washington at this time.

As new information emerges, please remind your community that *the risk of novel coronavirus is not at all connected with race, ethnicity or nationality*. Stigma will not help to fight the illness. Sharing accurate information during a time of heightened concern is one of the best things we can do to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. They usually cause mild respiratory illnesses such as the common cold. Some coronaviruses have caused more severe illness, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). 2019-nCoV is a new coronavirus that had not been seen in humans before December 2019.

Who is at risk for 2019-nCoV?

At this time, most people in Washington are not considered at risk for 2019-nCoV infection and do not need to seek medical evaluation for the virus.

How is the novel coronavirus infection spread?

Experts believe that the 2019-nCoV primarily spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Droplets from a cough or sneeze can travel up to about six feet. Another person can become infected if these droplets enter their mouth, nose or eyes directly or through their contaminated hands. An infected person who coughs or sneezes into their hands and touches surfaces such as phones, tables, door handles, or toys can contaminate them. While some coronaviruses can be spread to others through contaminated surfaces, coronaviruses generally do not survive on surfaces for a prolonged period of time. It takes 2 to 14 days after a person gets the virus in their body to become ill.

Who should seek medical evaluation for 2019-nCoV?

Children, staff, and volunteers who are:

- Ill with a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing AND have traveled from China in the last 14 days

OR

- Ill with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing AND have been identified by Public Health as a recent close contact of a confirmed 2019-nCoV case or had recent close contact with someone who is being evaluated for 2019-nCoV infection.

What should I do if I suspect a child, staff member, or volunteer is at risk for 2019-nCoV?

If a child, staff member, or volunteer meets the above criteria, it is important to place them in a private room away from others if possible, or keep them across the room and away from others. Notify parents or guardians to pick up an ill child right away. If parents cannot be contacted or cannot pick up their child right away, try alternative or emergency contacts for the child.

Immediately notify your local health department. They can provide you and the family with guidance.

Should children returning from China stay home from child care for 14 days?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all travelers from China (including children, staff and volunteers) arriving in the U.S. **AFTER** February 2, 2020 at 2 p.m. stay at home, away from others, and monitor their health for 14 days. This measure was put in place because of the increasing number of cases of 2019-nCoV in China.

There is no recommendation for people without symptoms arriving before this time to restrict their activities. All travelers from China arriving **BEFORE** February 2, 2020 at 2 p.m. can continue to attend preschool or child care and should take the following steps:

- Watch for any changes in your health for 14 days after leaving China.
- If you get a fever or develop a cough or difficulty breathing during this 14-day period, avoid contact with others. Call your doctor or healthcare provider to tell them about your symptoms and your recent travel.

What can I do to prevent 2019-nCoV infections in my child care or preschool?

Child cares and preschools do not need to take any special precautions beyond what is normally recommended to prevent the spread of germs. You can help children, families and staff reduce their risk for getting and spreading viral respiratory infections, including the flu and the common cold, by encouraging them to take simple steps which will also prevent 2019-nCoV. These include:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Monitor and assist children as they wash hands.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick. If a child becomes sick during care, place them in a location away from other children as they wait for their parent or guardian to pick them up.
- Stay home while sick and avoid close contact with others.
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash hands.
- If you are a manager or business owner and notice that an employee is sick, you should send that employee home. Do not require sick individuals to come into work.

In addition, we recommend that child cares and preschools follow their regular cleaning and disinfection program.

- Clean and sanitize/disinfect hard surfaces (tables, countertops, sinks) as required by licensing regulations and at least daily. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (door handles, faucets, railings) and bathrooms at least once a day. Use alcohol wipes to clean keyboards.
- Clean surfaces with fragrance-free soap or third-party certified cleaners. Thorough cleaning with soap and water will remove most microorganisms.
- Use a food-grade sanitizing solution on children's tabletops, toys, and dishes as required by the licensing agency.
- Use EPA safer disinfectants registered for influenza on hard surfaces. Clean the surface first to remove all organic matter. Apply the proper concentration of disinfectant and allow the required wet contact time. Pay close attention to hazard warnings and instructions for using personal protective items such as gloves and eye protection. Use disinfectants in a sufficiently ventilated space and when children are not present. If a disinfectant product is used on toys, tabletops, or other surfaces that children touch or that may come in contact with food, thoroughly rinse with potable water after the required wet contact time.

Where can I turn for more information?

- [Novel Coronavirus Outbreak 2020](#), Washington State Department of Health
- [Novel Coronavirus 2019](#), Benton-Franklin Health District
- [2019 Novel Coronavirus, Wuhan, China](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Guidance for Travelers](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Washington State Department of Health novel coronavirus call center: 1-800-525-0127, then press #
- [Classroom Cleaning - Tips for Teachers](#)
- [Handwashing to Prevent Illness at School](#)
- [Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools](#) (available for purchase from American Academy of Pediatrics)

As with any newly emerging infectious disease, knowledge evolves with time. Early on, it is difficult to know the ways in which the disease spreads, how effectively it spreads from person to person, and how severe the infection is. The Washington State Department of Health and Benton-Franklin Health District will continue to provide updates as more information becomes available.