

**Date:** January 31, 2020

**Title:** Novel Coronavirus Update – January 31

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Here is the latest available information for school districts.

### Key Messages

- The World Health Organization has declared the novel coronavirus a global health emergency; however, the B.C. Provincial Health Officer is advising that the risk is low within British Columbia and all necessary precautions are being taken to prevent the spread of infection.
- The Ministry of Health has advised and confirmed that individuals returning from affected regions do not need to be isolated at home or kept home from school.
- The Ministry of Education is in regular communication with the Ministry of Health, the Provincial Health Officer and local health authorities to learn of public health decisions and to ensure students and employees are kept informed and safe.
- The Ministry of Education would ask that you do not make assumptions about the risk of students or staff based on their ethnicity or travel history.

### Reducing the risk

The BC Centre for Disease Control recommends that to reduce the risk of exposure to novel coronavirus, individuals employ the same measures that are taken in relation to colds and flu:

- Wash one's hands frequently for at least 20 seconds using soap and hot water (it is the single most effective way of reducing the spread of infection).
- Practice other good hygiene habits: do not touch one's face/eyes/mouth with one's hands and cover one's mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing (ideally with a disposable tissue or the crease of the elbow).
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched workspace surfaces.
- Maintain good general health (eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, exercise in moderation).
- Stay home if sick.
- A new toll-free phone number (1-833-784-4397) has been established to answer questions from Canadians about the 2019 novel coronavirus. Service is available from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. until January 29 and from 7 a.m. to midnight starting January 30 (Eastern Standard Time).

### Useful Links

- Novel Coronavirus Q&A from HealthLinkBC: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus>
- BC Centre for Disease Control: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel))
- Government of Canada - Novel Coronavirus in China Travel Health Notice: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notices/210>
- Jan. 31 Joint Statement from Ministry of Health and B.C. Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0018-000193>
- Pandemic Response Framework and Pandemic Planning Guidelines for School Districts: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/healthyschools/pandemic\\_response\\_framework.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/healthyschools/pandemic_response_framework.pdf)
- Decision and Communication Guidelines about BC Schools and Daycare Closures in Response to a Novel Influenza A: [https://www.llbc.leg.bc.ca/public/PubDocs/bcdocs/461178/school\\_closure\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.llbc.leg.bc.ca/public/PubDocs/bcdocs/461178/school_closure_guidelines.pdf)

### Contact

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