El Paso County, CO
Public Health

Prevent • Promote • Protect

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School Resources and Information on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Background

With recent cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) reported in countries across the world, including the U.S., El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) is leading local efforts and proactively partnering with the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management and other partners to plan, prepare and respond together as a community. We are committed to keeping our residents informed and are ready to take necessary precautions should COVID-19 become more widespread.

While COVID-19 is a serious global public health threat, the immediate risk in our community remains low. Currently, there have been no confirmed cases in Colorado or El Paso County, and there is no evidence that COVID-19 is spreading in Colorado. EPCPH considers any new infectious disease a serious concern and has been diligently monitoring the situation since it began.

As new information emerges, please remind your community that the risk of COVID-19 is not at all connected with race, ethnicity or nationality. Sharing accurate, credible information during a time of heightened concern is one of the best things we can do to keep rumors, stigma and misinformation from spreading. We will continue to monitor the situation and maintain close communication with our state and local partners. We are committed to assuring a safe and healthy community, and we will share pertinent updates as needed.

What is a coronavirus?

COVID-19 isn't the only coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, and there are many common human coronaviruses that usually cause mild to moderate respiratory illness, like the common cold. Some coronaviruses have caused more severe illness, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). However, being novel does not mean that a virus is going to have more severe symptoms. A novel coronavirus means that this strain has not previously been identified in humans. COVID-19 is still being investigated in order to fully understand its severity.

What are common symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms typically appear within two to 14 days after exposure to a person sick with the disease. COVID-19 is a new disease, and we are learning more each day about its symptoms and how it is spread.

How does the virus spread?

The virus is typically spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing, much like influenza (flu). It's currently unclear if a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or their eyes. Often, with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).

What can I do to prevent COVID-19 infections in my school?

At this point, schools do not need to take any special precautions beyond what is normally recommended to prevent the spread of viruses in schools. You can help students 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 preventive steps which will also prevent COVID-19. These include:

- Staying home when sick
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Following the school's routine cleaning and disinfection program, and making sure to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Covering coughs or sneezes with a tissue, then washing hands with soap and water
- Encouraging students, staff and parents to get a flu shot during the flu season
- Providing adequate supplies for good hygiene, including clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, and paper towels.

Where can I turn for more information?

As with any newly emerging infectious disease, knowledge evolves with time. EPCPH will continue to update our COVID-19 website as more information becomes available. To stay up to date on COVID-19 developments, please check our website frequently and follow us on social media. For general questions, the state has activated the Colorado Health Emergency Line for the Public (CO HELP) at **1-877-462-2911** or email COHELP@RMPDC.org. Interpretation is available in many languages including Spanish, Mandarin and more.