

St Patrick's CBC

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8 March 2020

Dear Parents

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV)

The information below is prepared from information disseminated by ISASA (Independent Schools Association of South Africa) and the School's consultation with healthcare professionals.

On 1 December 2019, the Chinese Health Authorities were alerted to a cluster of pneumonia cases with unknown aetiology. A few weeks later, between 31 December 2019 and 7 January 2020, Chinese Health Authorities indicated that a Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was identified as the causative virus.

What is Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that are common amongst animals. They are what scientists call Zoonotic. Zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases caused by bacteria, viruses and parasites that are transmitted from animals to humans. In cases of infection, some humans are known to have illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe symptoms.

What is Novel Coronavirus?

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a new or "novel" strain of Coronavirus that has not previously been identified in humans. There is currently no vaccine for the Novel Coronavirus.

How does the Novel Coronavirus spread?

The Novel Coronavirus is a respiratory virus which spreads primarily via contact with an infected person through respiratory droplets generated when a person coughs or sneezes, or through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose. As a result, it is important that everyone practise good respiratory hygiene. For example, sneeze or cough into a flexed elbow, or use a tissue and discard it into a closed bin. It is also very important for people to wash their hands thoroughly and regularly – fingers, palms and back of the hands, as well as cleaning nails, washing wrists and forearms with soap and water. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer is effective unless hands are heavily soiled. Do not touch your face, do not rub your eyes, or touch your hair.

What are the symptoms Novel Coronavirus?

The symptoms are usually a mild to moderate upper respiratory tract illness, a runny nose, cough, sore throat, possibly a headache and a fever, similar to a common cold. These symptoms are said to last for a couple of days.

The three cardinal signs and symptoms which indicate that a person may be infected are:

1. raised temperature (above 38.4°Celsius);
2. dry cough;
3. difficulty breathing.

The person may complain of myalgia (aching muscles), a sore throat and rhinorrhoea (runny nose).

When should one be tested for 2019-nCoV?

You should contact your doctor by phone for advice if you have:

- An acute respiratory infection (sudden onset of either a cough, and/or a sore throat, and/or shortness of breath) and in the 14 days before the start of your symptoms you were either:
 - o in close contact with a confirmed or probable case of 2019-nCoV infection;
 - o travelled to an area where there is ongoing community transmission of 2019-nCoV;
 - o worked in or attended a healthcare facility where patients with 2019-nCoV infections were being treated.

Is there treatment for the Novel Coronavirus?

There is currently no vaccine or specific treatment. Generally, symptoms will subside on their own. Doctors can help relieve symptoms by prescribing pain or fever medication. Keeping hydrated is advised, as well as getting sufficient rest and as much sleep as possible,

How can you protect yourself from infection?

- Wash your hands frequently with soap or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Maintain social distancing – maintain at least 1 meter between yourself and other people, particularly those who are coughing, sneezing and/or have a fever.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- If you have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, seek medical care early. Inform your health care provider if you have travelled in any areas where 2019-nCoV has been reported, or if you have been in close contact with someone who has travelled and has respiratory symptoms.
- If you have mild respiratory symptoms and no travel history, carefully practise preventative respiratory habits, hand hygiene and stay at home until you have recovered.

What are we doing as a school?

- We are compiling policies for absenteeism, sick leave, home schooling when absent, etc.
- Educating staff and pupils on how to protect themselves and others from this virus.
- Providing hand sanitisers for teachers and pupils for classroom use. Urging pupils, parents and staff to wash their regularly with soap.
- Encouraging good hygiene by coughing into a flexed elbow, sneezing into a tissue and discarding used tissues into a closed bin.
- The household aides' team will ensure that all surfaces and possible sources of infection are vigorously cleaned with antiseptic cleaner.
- All staff will be instructed to remain at home if suffering from any respiratory tract infections.
- Parents are requested to keep their children at home if they are exhibiting any signs of an upper respiratory tract infection or other symptoms of concern.
- All family members are requested to stay away from school if they are displaying any symptoms of the virus.

Although the Coronavirus is a matter of concern, we all need to remain calm. Please do not create panic or be part of fear-mongering. I will continue to be in contact with Healthcare Practitioners, the Independent Schools Association of South Africa (ISASA), the Department of Basic Education, and/or take the lead from the National Department of Health or other government agencies dealing with this matter.

If you have any concerns, please contact me directly (082 8787 004 or jtredoux@stpatricks.co.za). I will also be at the coffee stand in Cornwall Street from 06h45 until 07h10 this week if you would like to speak to me regarding this matter.

Please be assured of our ongoing concern for the well-being of all members of the St Patrick's CBC family. We commit to sharing any pertinent information with you. We pray for everyone's health and protection during this time.

Yours sincerely



Mr J Tredoux
Executive Head