



Keeping our Schools and Staff Healthy:

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Preparedness & Influenza Prevention



Dear Parents and Guardians,

Great Falls Public Schools has had a busy cold and flu season, as many staff and parents know. Along with increasing influenza rates, there has also been a lot of attention in the media regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Please know that our District is working with public health officials and community leaders to update our protocols on pandemic illness and ensure that we are prepared in the event that COVID-19 becomes active in our community. Below is information on COVID-19 and everyday measures that you can do to help protect you and your family during cold and flu season.

What is a Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Human coronaviruses are common throughout the world. There are several types of coronaviruses including those that cause symptoms of the common cold. Human coronaviruses commonly cause mild to moderate illness. COVID-19 is the coronavirus that has recently emerged and was initially associated with Wuhan China. The illness has been identified in the United States, but there are NO confirmed cases in Montana.

How does COVID-19 spread?

According to recent studies, it appears that transmission of the virus occurs via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes as is the case with other respiratory illnesses like the common cold or influenza.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with this novel coronavirus have reported mild to severe respiratory illness with cough, fever, and/or shortness of breath. These symptoms usually occur 2-14 days after exposure.

How do I know if I am at risk for COVID-19?

At this time, the risk for most people remains low but a person at risk includes specific symptoms and travel to affected areas (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>) within the past 14 days OR close contact to a confirmed case. (More evaluation criteria can be found on the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>).

What do I do if I think I have been exposed to COVID-19?

If you learn that you have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, please stay home and call your health care provider or health department for further instruction. Make this call prior to going to a health care facility for evaluation.

How can I help protect myself and my family?

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus. The same preventative measures that are recommended during cold and flu season will also help to protect against COVID-19:

- **Practice good hand hygiene.** Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Make sure you LATHER, and SCRUB during this time. There needs to be bubbles! Use at least a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water not available.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.**
- **Cover coughs/sneezes with a tissue (or your elbow).** Dispose tissues in trash bin (do not reuse). Wash hands after disposing of tissue.
- **Keep sick students home.** *If your child has a fever (temperature over 100 °F), please keep them home until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication like Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen.*
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.** Clean more frequently when someone is ill.

Sincerely,

Thomas G Moore
Superintendent
Great Falls Public Schools

Trisha Gardner
Health Officer
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