

Greg Kesterman

Interim Health Commissioner

250 William Howard Taft Road

Cincinnati, OH 45219

Phone: 513.946.7800 Fax: 513.946.7890

hcph.org

March 3, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We understand that the Novel Coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, is causing much anxiety in our community, country, and around the world. Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH) is working to provide you with the most up-to-date information on this rapidly evolving situation. The following is a brief overview of the current situation. For more information, please visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.

WHAT IS KNOWN

- The virus causing COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified and causes a respiratory illness ranging from a mild cold-like illness to severe pneumonia.
- Most (81%) of people diagnosed with COVID-19 in China have had mild illness.
- Similar to influenza (flu), the people who are most likely to develop severe illness and complications from COVID-19 are older individuals (>60 years old); those with other medical conditions (like heart and lung disease or diabetes); and individuals with weakened immune systems.
- There is no vaccine or treatment currently available for COVID-19. The National Institutes of Health has started the process of evaluating treatments and developing a vaccine already.
- Currently, there is NO confirmed community spread of COVID-19 in Hamilton County, meaning the virus is not being spread from person-to-person. However, experts predict there will eventually be community spread. HCPH is preparing for when/if this happens.

HOW THE VIRUS SPREADS

- COVID-19 is believed to spread primarily the same way the common cold or flu spreads—through respiratory droplets that are produced when someone coughs or sneezes.
- People who are most at risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 are those who have been in close contact (within about 6 feet) with someone who has the virus.
- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread of the virus might be possible before a person has symptoms, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

- Keep children home when they are sick. Students (and parents/guardians) who are ill, especially with acute respiratory symptoms (not allergies or chronic conditions), should stay home.
- Teach children to always cover their cough and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.



- Handwashing is a very effective way to prevent sickness. Remind children to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after using the restroom, before they eat, and after they cough, sneeze, or blow their nose. Hand sanitizer is a good option to use if soap is not available.
- Tell children to avoid touching their mouth and nose or rubbing their eyes since that is how germs get into the body.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects using everyday household disinfectants. High-touch surfaces like door knobs, toilet handles, and sink handles should be cleaned more often.
- Plan for when community spread occurs.
 - Make a plan to designate a caregiver, such as a family member or neighbor, for a sick child(ren) if you can't stay home.
 - Find out your child's school plan to communicate with you when needed, such as through call or text notification, emails, or checking their website.

Because most people with COVID-19 have mild disease, the likelihood that HCPH will recommend closing schools is very low. In the unlikely event that HCPH recommends closing your child's school, it is important to have a plan for who could take care of your child.

HCPH staff are working day and night to monitor this evolving situation and will continue to provide new information to the community as things change. Please contact your school leadership or healthcare provider should you have additional questions.

More information can be found at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.

Sincerely,



Greg Kesterman
Interim Health Commissioner