

## **Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 FAQ for Schools**

### **Disease Basics**

**Q: Is the spread of COVID-19 now contained?**

A: No, in California, as of 03/02/2020, approximately 300 persons have been tested to date, and 43 cases tested positive.

**Q: Do most people who have COVID-19 become severely ill and die?**

A: While COVID-19 has a high transmission rate, it has a low mortality rate. For those who have tested positive for COVID-19, approximately 80 percent do not exhibit symptoms that would require hospitalization. Some populations are more vulnerable. Risk begins to increase for individuals over 50 years of age and with compromised immune systems. Risk factors appear to increase with age and the highest risk group are persons age 80 and over.

**Q: What does “pandemic” mean?**

A: Pandemic means a worldwide spread of a new disease.

**Q: Does “pandemic” mean the same thing as a “plague” ?**

A: Pandemic means a worldwide spread of a new disease, whereas with a plague is defined as a contagious disease that spreads rapidly and kills many people.

**Q: Do people die from seasonal influenza?**

A: Yes, 40,000 people die each year from the seasonal flu.

**Q: Will the number of COVID-19 positives reduce as the warmer weather approaches?**

A: Since it is not a seasonal flu, it may continue into the warmer months ahead.

**Q: Are hand sanitizers helpful in preventing COVID-19?**

A: Hand sanitizers appear to work very well against COVID-19. COVID-19 is easy to kill, as opposed to Norovirus where hand sanitizers do not work. Rigorous hand-washing is recommended as a critical preventative measure.

**Q: Should all travelers coming in from other countries be isolated?**

A: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has three levels of travel warning levels: Warning- Level 3-Avoid nonessential Travel. Alert- Level 2-Practice Enhanced Precautions. Watch- Level 1-Practical Usual Precautions.

**Q: Will we expand mandatory quarantine guidelines to travelers to/ from other countries?**

A: CDC has established geographic risk-stratification criteria. In all levels, travelers should watch their health during travel and for 14 days after returning to the U.S. These risk levels can change often, so it is important to check the [CDC Information for Travelers](#).

*There are four levels of Risk Assessment:*

Black (Level 3) Widespread sustained (ongoing) transmission and restrictions on entry to the U.S.

Dark Blue (Also Level 3) Widespread (ongoing) transmission.

Light Blue (Level 2) Sustained (ongoing) community transmission.

Aqua (Level 1) Limited community transmission.

**Q: What are the recommendations for those who have traveled out of the U.S.?**

A: If a person is returning from international travel, the recommendations are:

- If they have symptoms, they should stay home, contact their healthcare provider, and provide them travel history.
- If a person has traveled to countries experiencing coronavirus outbreak and have no symptoms, they *may* choose to stay home out of an abundance of caution, but it is not currently mandatory. If they develop symptoms, they are encouraged to call their healthcare provider and tell them of their symptoms and recent travel history.

**Q: How does COVID-19 spread?**

A: The virus now appears to be spreading from person-to-person. It is still unclear how easily this virus is spreading between people.

**Q: Can someone who has COVID-19 spread the illness to others?**

A: Yes, COVID-19 can be spread from person to person.

**Q: Can someone who has been quarantined from COVID-19 spread the illness to others?**

A: For COVID-19, the period of quarantine is 14 days from the last date of exposure, because 14 days is the longest incubation period seen for similar coronaviruses, therefore is not considered a risk for spreading.

**Q: How can people help stop stigma related to COVID-19?**

A: Communicating the facts that viruses do not target specific racial or ethnic groups and explaining how COVID-19 actually spreads can help stop stigma.

## Prevention

**Q: How can I help protect myself?**

A: Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth. Stay home when you are sick. Cover coughs and sneezes. Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects. Wash hands often with soap and water.

**Q: Should I wear a facemask to protect myself?**

A: CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from COVID-19. A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and are showing symptoms.

**Q: What classroom precautions should be taken?**

A: Try to give students space as classrooms allow - three feet would be ideal, but is not required. Encourage regular handwashing protocols.

**Q: Should we discourage giving younger students alcohol based hand sanitizer?**

A: One of the best ways to slow the spread of the disease is to wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, the use of hand sanitizers with an alcohol content of at least 60 percent alcohol should be effective. Students can use hand sanitizers with proper supervision.

**Q: When sending a child home with a fever and/or other signs of being ill, what do schools ask of the guardians?**

A: As with any influenza, children should be fever free (without fever reducing medication) for at least 24 hours.

**Q: How will schools follow the CDC’s “frequent hand washing” guidelines?**

A: The hand washing guidelines suggest washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, then the use of a hand sanitizer with at least a 60% alcohol content should help the spread of COVID-19. Districts are developing protocols to accommodate these practices and will communicate to their school sites. For example, allowing for more time between classes and allowing for access to handwashing facilities and hand sanitizers. Schools are also ensuring soap dispensers are refilled, paper towels and tissues are available and that trash receptacles are readily accessible to dispose of used paper towels and tissues.

## **What You Should Know**

**Q: What are the symptoms that COVID-19 cause?**

A: Symptoms can include mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.

**Q: How common are severe cases of COVID-19?**

A: SCCPHD states most people who have contracted COVID-19 have resulted in mild cases. The older a person is, the more susceptible they are to more severe reactions to COVID-19. Children appear to be less affected by the virus at this time.

**Q: Is a doctor’s note required for absences or to return to school?**

A: No. Schools should not require a doctor’s note.

**Q: If a child is feeling ill, should they stay home?**

A: Yes. Children who are experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness should not attend school or other school related activities until the symptoms are no longer present.

**Q: Should we continue to approve field trips within the U.S.?**

A: At this point in time, approval of field trips for students and staff who are not ill, and are within the U.S., can continue. Any staff or student experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness should not attend the field trip.

**Q: What if a student becomes ill while on the field trip?**

A: Prior to any field trip, review the field trip permission form: The requirements and expectations not only of the students, but also of parents and guardians. Revisit required protocols if the student becomes ill or injured, and the expectations of parents and guardians in case of an emergency.

**Q: Should schools cancel events, sporting activities, and other large gatherings?**

A: It is not necessary at this time to cancel events. Individuals who are not feeling well should not attend events. It is important to emphasize the proper hand hygiene in various settings. Individuals at high risk should take proper precautions in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCCPHD) and the CDC.

**Q: What materials are available to teach about proper hand hygiene and coughing/sneezing etiquette?**

A: Respiratory hygiene etiquette includes:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are [sick](#).
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and clean your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Posters and videos are available at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/videos.html>

**Q: Is there a template letter for schools to inform parents about COVID-19?**

A: SCCOE has developed this COVID-19 template for districts to use.

<http://bit.ly/2vDJfoc>