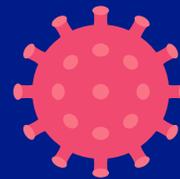


# COVID-19 (Coronavirus)



## Guidance for Bermuda's Public Schools

Based on guidelines from the World Health Organization, the following information is provided by the Ministry of Health for Bermuda's Public Schools.

Recognizing that respiratory infections, including influenza and COVID-19, can impact children, teens and young adults, there are actions school administrators can take immediately that will help to prevent the spread of these diseases in Bermuda's schools:

- Students, teachers, staff and visitors to the school should regularly wash their hands with soap and water:
  - before leaving home;
  - on arrival at school;
  - after using the toilet;
  - after breaks and sporting activities;
  - before eating food, including snacks; and
  - before leaving school.
- If soap and water are not available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol should be used.
- If students, staff or teachers are unwell, they should stay at home;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Avoid close contact with people who are unwell;
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

### What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from

the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some persons may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Around 1 out of every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness. People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention and call in advance.

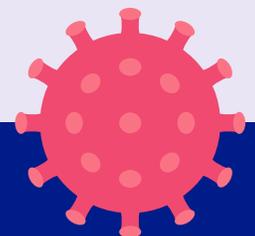
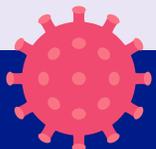
### How does COVID-19 spread?

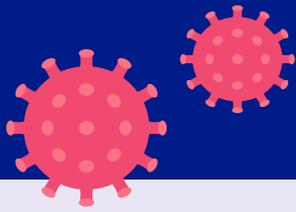
People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus.

The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others.

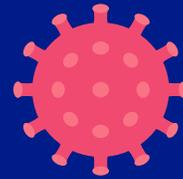
People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. Try to maintain at least one metre (three feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

**Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19 by visiting the Government of Bermuda's website <https://www.gov.bm/health-information>**





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The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. COVID-19 is not spread by mosquitos, water, or food.

## Should I worry about COVID-19?

Illness due to COVID-19 infection is generally mild, especially for children and young adults. However, it can cause serious illness: about one in every five people who catch it need hospital care. It is therefore quite normal for you to worry about how the COVID-19 outbreak will affect you and your loved ones.

You can channel your concerns into actions to protect yourself, your loved ones and our community. First and foremost among these actions is:

- Regular and thorough hand-washing with soap and water. If soap and water aren't immediately available use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- Practice good respiratory hygiene. Cover your cough or sneeze.
- If you are unwell stay at home and do not go to school. You also must not attend social gatherings or attend extra-curricular activities.

## Should I wear a mask to protect myself?

Only wear a mask if you are ill with COVID-19 symptoms (especially coughing) or looking after someone who may have COVID-19. Disposable face masks can only be used once. If you are not ill or looking after someone who is ill then you are wasting a mask. There is a world-wide shortage of masks, so WHO urges people to use masks wisely.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue and maintain a distance of at least one meter (three feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing.

## What can schools do to prepare?

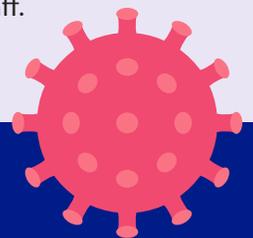
Schools can put the following measures in place:

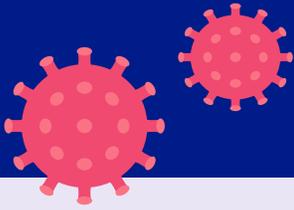
- Provide continuous education and reminders to students on disease prevention, and ensure soap and paper towels are available;

- Provide continuous education for custodial staff and teachers on disease prevention;
- Ensure compliance and correct use of approved cleaning products for sanitizing and establish a schedule of cleaning;
- Plan for someone to be appointed to take control of the school in the absence of the principal and the deputy due to illness or there is a reduction in staff available for the routine duties;
- Update contact details for all students;
- Review and update the School Emergency Plan. Included in the plan should be emergency contact information for all students, teachers and members of staff. Include contact details for the ministry officer the school communicates with during a school emergency.
- Order liquid hand soap, alcohol-based sanitizers, tissues, trash bags, paper towels and disinfectant wipes. They must be stored in a safe, locked location.
- Advise students and parents how they will be informed of school closures and openings.
- Teachers should prepare work packets for students to complete at homes. Teachers should be available by email and phone for student enquiries about work.

Additional strategies to prevent the spread of diseases in schools:

- Monitor student absences due to ill health. Ask parents/guardians for the reason of the student's illness and provide regular updates to the school nurse and attendance officer.
- Make sure lower primary students (P1-P3) wash their hands often, with soap and water for 20 seconds, under supervision throughout the school day. Hand sanitizers should not be used in lower primary levels (P1 to P3), due to the potential hazards of the alcohol-based products.
- Ensure upper primary (P4-P6), middle and senior students follow the same hand washing rules. They may use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Reinforce the disease prevention tips during science lessons, in school assemblies and find other opportunities to reinforce healthy hand hygiene and good respiratory hygiene. Place posters by Healthy Schools in classrooms, hallways, the school office and bathrooms as a constant reminder to students, teachers and staff.





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- Work with cleaners to make sure often touched items like desks, door handles, water taps, and key boards, are cleaned with disinfectant periodically throughout the school day, with a more thorough cleaning after school, including toys and play materials.
- Ensure the spouts and spout covers of the water fountains are cleaned regularly.
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation in classrooms and encourage staff to open windows.

## **What steps should I take if a student and/or a staff member become ill at school?**

- Isolate students who have flu-like symptoms in a room under supervision or have them wait outside with an adult. The supervising adult must stand at least one metre (three feet) away from the sick student.
- Notify the student's parent or guardian to collect their child.
- As soon as possible, send the student and staff member home.
- The Ministry of Health will conduct a risk assessment and the Principal will be advised of next steps.

## **Will schools be closed?**

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education will make a decision together on whether the closure of a school is warranted. If a school is to be closed, parents, students, and staff will be notified immediately. All communications options will be used to announce the closure of a school.

If a school is closed, it will remain closed for the entire school day. All before and after school programmes, athletic events and practices and use of the building by outside groups will be cancelled to prevent the spread of the virus.

## **What procedure will be followed when reopening a school?**

Following a comprehensive cleaning of the school and if no additional confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 are identified among students, teachers or staff, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education will reopen the school. The school's principal will be notified. Close monitoring of the health of some students, teachers and staff may be expected.

If you have questions, contact:

Lynn Jackson  
Coordinator, Child Health  
**441-278-6452**

or

Marie Beach  
Healthy Schools Coordinator  
**441-278-6502**

