



2019 Novel Coronavirus [COVID-19]

March 9, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Novel Coronavirus, known as COVID-19, is causing great concern in our community. Southwest District Health (SWDH), your local health department, is working to provide you with the most up-to-date information on this rapidly evolving situation.

Currently, there is NO confirmed community spread of COVID-19 in Idaho, meaning the virus is not being spread from person-to-person.

What is Known about COVID-19

- COVID-19 is a new coronavirus and causes an illness ranging from a mild cold-like illness to severe pneumonia.
- Most (81%) people who get sick have mild illness, including most children.
- People who are most likely to have severe illness are older people (over the age of 60 years) and those with other medical conditions like heart and lung disease or diabetes.
- There is no vaccine or treatment available at this time, but treatments and a vaccine are being developed. It may take a year or more for a vaccine to be available.

How COVID-19 Spreads

- The virus spreads mostly the same way the common cold or flu spreads, through the air when someone coughs or sneezes.
- Being within 6 feet of someone who has the virus, increases your risk for illness.
- People are likely to spread the virus to others when they are most sick.
- In rare instances, people who are infected but do not feel sick may be able to spread the virus.

What You Can Do Now

- Keep your child home when they are sick.
- Students, parents, and guardians who are ill, especially with cold or flu-like symptoms (not allergies or chronic conditions), should stay home.
- Teach your child to cover their cough and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.
- Tell your child to not touch their eyes, mouth, and nose.

What You Can Do Now (Continued)

- Remind your child to wash their hands with soap and water (or use hand sanitizer) after they touch their face, use the restroom, and before they eat.
- Clean surfaces and objects that get touched a lot. Clean high-touch surfaces like door knobs, toilet handles, and sink handles more.
- Plan for when community spread occurs. Have a plan to designate a caregiver, such as a family member or neighbor, for a sick child(ren) if you can't stay home and pay attention to school emails, phone calls, and/or text messages.

Will Schools Close?

Because most people with COVID-19 have mild disease, the likelihood that SWDH will recommend closing schools is very low.

Please contact your school leadership or healthcare provider should you have additional questions.

There are three places you can go for reliable information. They are:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- State of Idaho:
<https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/>
- Southwest District Health Call Center, open weekdays from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm: 208-455-5411.

Sincerely,
Southwest District Health