



March 13, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Macon County
Public Health

We understand that the Novel Coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, is causing much anxiety in our community, country and the world. We are working to provide you with the most up to date information on this rapidly changing situation. Following is a brief overview of the current situation. For more information and FAQ's, please visit [NCDHHS: Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Response in North Carolina](#)

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 had mild disease, including most children.
- Similar to influenza, the people who are most likely to develop severe disease and complications from COVID-19 are older individuals (>65 years old) and those with other medical conditions like heart and lung disease or diabetes.
- There is no vaccine or treatment currently available for COVID-19, but the National Institutes of Health is evaluating treatments and developing a vaccine.
- Experts predict there will eventually be community spread. MCPH 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 disease.
- 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; there have been reports of this with COVID-19, 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 your children to always cover their cough and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.
- Remind them to wash their hands with soap and water (or use hand sanitizer) after they touch their face, use the restroom and before they eat.
- Tell children to avoid touching their mouth and nose since that is how germs get into the body.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (please follow current requirements for sanitizers and disinfectants)
 - Increase cleaning of high touch surfaces like door knobs, toilet handles, and sink handles.
- Plan for when community spread occurs.
 - Ensure you 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.

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- Know your child care center's plan to communicate with you when needed, such as phone calls, email or checking their website.

There has been a lot of information in the news about face masks, and it is important to understand face masks are not recommended by CDC for general use. The best use of face masks as identified by CDC are for those who are sick, as well as health workers and caregivers who are taking care of someone in a close setting. This will help avoid spreading the virus to others. If your child develops symptoms at school, they might come home wearing a mask.

Because most people with COVID-19 have mild disease, the likelihood that the schools will be closed is very low, but not zero. In the highly unlikely chance that your child's school is shut down due to a COVID-19 outbreak, it is important for parents/guardians to have a plan for who could take care of your child.

MCPH staff is working with the community to monitor this developing 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. You can also call MCPH at 828-349-2081 or Macon County Environmental Services at 828-349-2490.

More information can be found at:

- <https://www.facebook.com/MaconPublicHealth/>
- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus, or at
- [NCDHHS: Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Response in North Carolina.](#)

Age appropriate Handwashing Education can also be found here:

- http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/childrens-health/child-care-food-program/nutrition/documents/2017-12-14-Lesson-12_Why-We-Wash-Our-Hands.pdf

Sincerely,

Carmine Rocco, Macon County Health Director