



Frequently Asked Questions/Coronavirus (COVID-19)

In collaboration with the Needham Department of Public Health, the Needham Public Schools wishes to provide the following information for families about the Coronavirus.

INFORMATION ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

Q: *What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?*

A: Coronaviruses are a new group of respiratory viruses not previously seen in humans. The severity of illness ranges from mild to severe, and is spread through droplets from an infected person. The following fact sheets in multiple languages from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) contain more information:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/english-2019-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-0/download>

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/spanish-nuevo-coronavirus-2019-covid-19-0/download>

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/traditional-chinese-2019-nianxinxingguanzhuangbingdu-covid-19/download>

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/portuguese-2019-novo-coronavirus-covid-19/download>

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/haitian-creole-nouvo-kowonaviris-2019-covid-19/download>

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/vietnamese-chung-moi-cua-vi-rut-corona-2019-covid-19/download>

Q: *Where can I get the latest information?*

A: The following websites have the most current information on COVID-19 and we are monitoring them daily:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

<https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

<http://www.needhamma.gov/85/Public-Health>

If you would like to contact the Public Health Nurse directly, email: publichealthnursing@needhamma.gov
If you need to call (email is preferable), call 781-455-4934 and leave a message.

Q: *Who can I call with questions?*

A: Needham Public Schools is fortunate to have a highly skilled [nursing staff](#) who is available to answer your questions and concerns.

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES:

Q: *What measures can I take to prevent COVID-19, flu, all illnesses?*

A: The same prevention measures apply to COVID-19 as other illnesses such as flu, gastrointestinal viruses, bacterial infections, etc. and that is: Handwashing; covering your mouth/nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing; avoidance of touching your eyes, nose, mouth; cleaning frequently used surfaces; and staying home when you are sick. Not only is it important to wash your hands, it is very important to wash your hands correctly. [Here](#) is a great resource on when and how to wash your hands from the CDC. In addition, flu remains more prevalent than COVID-19 and it's not too late to get a flu shot.

Q: *What are some resources that are available on how I can talk to my children about COVID-19?*

A: The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) has provided the following tips on how to talk to your child about COVID-19:

https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASN/3870c72d-fff9-4ed7-833f-215de278d256/UploadedImages/PDFs/02292020_NASP_NASN_COVID-19_parent_handout.pdf

https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASN/3870c72d-fff9-4ed7-833f-215de278d256/UploadedImages/PDFs/02292020_NASP_NASN_COVID-19_parent_handout_Spanish.pdf

Q: What does it mean to be a “close contact”?

A: Close contacts are defined as persons who are within approximately 6 feet of an infected person for greater than 10 minutes, or living in the same household, or caring for an infected person.

Q: Can my student attend school if a member of my household is quarantined?

A: If a member of your household is quarantined, and does *not* have [symptoms](#) suggestive of COVID-19, your child will likely be able to attend school. However, please call your child’s school nurse before sending your child to school so that the nurse may obtain information from you and consult with Needham’s Public Health Department (NPHD). **If your child is at low risk for COVID-19 and does not have symptoms, the NPHD is not advising anyone to stay away from school or activities. Schools and the NPHD are in close communication and as always, use your own discretion.

Q: What should I do if someone in my household is quarantined?

A: If someone in your household is quarantined and does not have symptoms of COVID-19, all close contacts should monitor their own health and call their healthcare provider and NPHD if they develop symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.

Q: Should my child wear a mask to school?

A: Face masks are not recommended to protect against respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should only wear a mask if your healthcare provider recommends it; and masks should be worn by people who have symptoms of COVID-19. Face masks are in short supply and it is important to preserve the supply for healthcare workers and people taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settings.

Q: When should my child stay home from school?

A: Needham Public Schools has the following guidelines for when to keep your child home from school. Please let your child’s school nurse know the reason for your child’s absence, and if your family has either traveled recently or been in contact with someone who has traveled in the previous 14 days. It is important to communicate with our school nurses so that they may track absence rates, illnesses and provide guidance.

As a reminder, students should stay home per the following Needham Public Schools guidelines:

- A diagnosis of a communicable disease
- Fever greater than 100 degrees within the last 24 hours off of fever reducing medication
- If diagnosed with strep and/or bacterial infection, a student should stay home until a full 24 hours of antibiotic treatment has been completed
- Vomiting/diarrhea with the last 24 hours; students should be able to consume and tolerate their “typical” diet before returning to school
- Acute pain that requires relief by narcotic medication
- An upper respiratory illness with persistent coughing and/or unmanageable nasal discharge
- An undiagnosed rash

Q: What can I do to help our community?

A: Here are a few suggestions:

- Practice illness prevention measures as stated above.
- Stay home when you are sick and keep your child home if he/she isn't feeling well.
- Stay informed using reliable sources (as listed above).
- Join the Needham Medical Reserve Corps by visiting:
<https://www.needhamma.gov/411/Medical-Reserve-Corps>
- Sign up for Alert Needham for emergency updates at [needhamma.gov/alertneedham](https://www.needhamma.gov/alertneedham), or text "Needham" 67283 to receive alerts by text.
- Maintain confidentiality of students and families.
- If you or your family member has a medical emergency and has been under quarantine for suspicion of COVID-19, let the dispatcher know so that our emergency first responders can take appropriate precautions.

DISTRICT PREVENTION PLANS**Q: How are decisions made regarding who should stay home for 14 days?**

A: It's important to note that not everyone has the same level of risk, and district decisions are made based on individualized information we receive in addition to consultation with our Public Health Department, Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), and CDC guidelines.

Q: What are the schools doing to help prevent the spread of germs?

A: School nurses are educating students on illness prevention measures both in classrooms and on an individual basis. In addition, nurses are asking students to wash hands upon entering health offices, conducting illness and absenteeism surveillance, communicating with NPHD, and building administrators. The facilities department is cleaning school buildings thoroughly each evening, and as needed to disinfect high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs). Schools are receiving additional cleaning supplies. Bus and van drivers are doing additional wipe downs of seats. School staff are working with students to reinforce illness prevention measures, including opportunities for hand washing, and school staff are working together to promote illness prevention and healthy habits.

Q: Will field trips / athletic events be cancelled?

A: There is no recommendation to cancel field trips or athletic events at this time; the Superintendent and each school will stay updated and make decisions based on recommendations from the Needham Board of Health, MDPH and CDC.

Q: Does Needham Public Schools have a plan if COVID-19 is confirmed in our community?

A: Needham Public Schools has an Emergency Operating Plan and will continue to work with town departments, NPHD, and MDPH to update and respond to the latest information. Staff are developing a plan for teaching/learning in an online environment should it become necessary.

Q: How are the schools staying informed?

A: The Superintendent, Director of School Health Services, and School Nurses are in frequent communication with the Public Health Department and School Physician, and are monitoring guidance set forth by CDC and MDPH.