Latest advice from NHS and Public Health Agency on Coronavirus

The advice from NHS and PHA remain largely the same as it has over recent days. Good hygiene practices should be maintained and reinforced for all family members with particular emphasis on the regular washing of hands.

If you think you may have been contact with anyone who has Coronavirus or have recently returned from an area which has a large number of cases then you should monitor yourself (refrain from attending large social gatherings) and contact the NHS 111 Service.

**\*\*\* General School Guidelines \*\*\***

The guidelines remain largely the same as those precautions regarding any pupil who has been feeling unwell at any other point in the school year. Those pupils who are feeling unwell (regardless of which ailment they have) should remain at home and not come to school as the close proximity and interaction of primary school pupils can spread illnesses quickly.

\*\*\* Information from the PHA (Public Health Agency) \*\*\*

**1. What is COVID-19 (coronavirus)?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common across the world. These viruses can cause mild symptoms ranging from a mild fever, shortness of breath and cough to more serious conditions such as severe pneumonia and breathing difficulties.

In December 2019, a new strain of coronavirus (COVID-19) was first identified in Wuhan City, China. This virus has now spread to other countries. The UK Chief Medical Officers have declared the risk to the public to be moderate. But the risk to individuals remains low.

The incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2 and 14 days. This means that if a person remains well 14 days after contact with someone with confirmed coronavirus, they have not been infected.

Generally, these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. There is no evidence that children are more affected than other age groups – very few cases have been reported in children.

**2. How COVID-19 is spread**

From what we know about other coronaviruses, spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within two metres) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.

Droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes (termed respiratory secretions) containing the virus are most likely to be the most important means of transmission.

There are two routes by which people could become infected:

• secretions can be directly transferred into the mouths or noses of people who are nearby (within two metres) or could be inhaled into the lungs

• it is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface or object that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching a door knob or shaking hands then touching own face).

There is currently no good evidence that people who do not have symptoms are infectious to others.

**3. Preventing spread of infection**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

There are general principles anyone can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

• washing your hands often - with soap and water, or use alcohol sanitiser if handwashing facilities are not available. This is particularly important after taking public transport.

• covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in a bin.

• people who feel unwell should stay at home and should not attend work or any education or early years/youth setting

• children, pupils, students, staff and visitors should wash their hands:
- before leaving home
- on arrival at school
- after using the toilet
- after breaks and sporting activities o before food preparation
- before eating any food, including snacks before leaving school

• use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available

• 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

• if you are worried about your symptoms or those of a child or colleague, please call NHS 111. Do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment but phone.

• see further information on the Public Health Agency website.