



Coronavirus Information

Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, has been in the news a lot lately, and I thought it would be a good idea to share some information about our response to the situation with the SHS and UNITI community. While the danger to most Canadians is minimal at this time, it is an ever-shifting situation and it is best that we are prepared.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a virus similar to a cold or flu. Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. Symptoms include the following: fever, cough, difficulty breathing, and, if serious, pneumonia in both lungs. In severe cases, infection can lead to death. At present, it appears that less than 2% of people who get COVID-19 will die, and that percentage is much less for healthy people (this also means that the risk is greater for people who have compromised immune systems). Here is a video that explains COVID-19: <https://www.technologynetworks.com/neuroscience/videos/what-actually-happens-if-you-get-coronavirus-331164>

How is COVID-19 Spread?

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- respiratory droplets generated when you cough or sneeze
- close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

How can I prevent the spread of COVID-19?

In general, the following advice can help reduce the risk of infection or spreading infection to others:

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (makes no difference if it is cold or warm water)
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- stay home if you are sick
- when coughing or sneezing:
 - cover your mouth and nose with your arm or tissues to reduce the spread of germs
 - immediately dispose of any tissues you have used into the garbage as soon as possible and wash your hands afterwards
- avoid visiting people in hospitals or long-term care centres if you are sick

Here is a good resource for proper hand washing:

<https://www.usatoday.com/pages/interactives/news/coronavirus-covid-19-defense-proper-hand-washing/>

What is the risk to Canadians?

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has assessed the public health risk associated with COVID-19 as low for Canada (March 2, 2020). Public health risk is continually reassessed as new information becomes available. Updated information about COVID-19 can be found on the Government of Canada's Public Health website here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>.

What is SHS doing about COVID-19?

At present, it is business as usual at SHS and UNITI. Leadership is monitoring and will follow what Fraser Health, and the provincial and federal government are advising about the virus. In some countries, where the virus is more prevalent, places where large numbers of people gather have been closed (schools, malls, soccer stadiums, etc). It is possible that this will happen in Canada. If that is the case, SHS will establish essential services protocols, which likely means that most of our services except for Staffed Residential and Chorus will be closed.

Should I talk about COVID-19 with the people we support?

As with everything that SHS does, we are taking a person-centred approach to talking about COVID-19 with the people we support. Many will have seen news about the virus on TV or social media, so it is important that we are prepared to talk about it with people if they are worried or want more information. We should be reinforcing good hygiene practices, especially the washing of hands with soap for at least 20 seconds after being in close contact with other people or with surfaces used by other people. A good resource for a straight-forward explanation about COVID-19 that you could share with people you support can be found here: <http://easyread.info/coronavirus-easy-read/?fbclid=IwAR3wqK02gVpWyzOkCQ68fGbT5z7pePKCaPWI7iwt2sLIXnfcuAsT3x7TE8A>

Who should I talk to if I have questions about COVID-19 and SHS's response?

Please talk to your supervisor if you have questions about COVID-19 and SHS's response to the virus.