

COVID-19 Update Thursday, 3/12 To Families Monitoring Situation

Dear families,

We continue to monitor the spread of coronavirus, or COVID-19, especially as there are now confirmed cases in Minnesota. We are following the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommendations when it comes to making decisions around closing schools or programs, which at this time have not changed: **our school remains open, and all events and activities (including History Day tonight) are still on.** We are closely following sources such as MDH and CDC, and will immediately notify you of any change.

We are mindful of those who may be particularly vulnerable to serious illness and respect individual choices to stay away from public spaces. **If you keep your student at home, please contact your advisor/homeroom teacher and we will provide the lessons and work missed, as we do for any extended absence.** We are also working on a plan for how to continue learning in the event of a school closure, and contingency plans for any events or activities that may be affected.

We do have one parent in our Middle School community who was possibly exposed to the virus in a group setting. That parent is voluntarily isolated at home awaiting test results (hopefully by tomorrow). Even though MDH advised that it is still safe for their children to attend school, we asked that they also stay home pending the results of the test. We will contact you immediately if the results are positive (note that, thankfully, only 9 out of 316 tests in Minnesota have turned out positive.)

Our Crisis Management Team has sorted through a myriad of valuable information sources, and has developed a tentative plan that was vetted by the Executive Committee and faculty. Please note that this plan is tentative - information and the situation are evolving so rapidly that we must be ready to respond to new developments. For now, our projection is:

- March 16-20 - School remains open and all activities continue, unless MDH recommends otherwise, or a positive exposure case in our community makes it necessary to close
- **March 23-27 - We predict we will likely close that week.** Since we had no snow days this year, these days would be non-instructional, allowing our faculty to complete the creation of distance learning plans
- March 30-Apr.3 - Spring Break
- After Spring Break, we would hopefully be able to re-open, or have a well-developed plan in place for how to support learning at home

We are mindful of the burden that a school closure places on families. We are researching community resources (food, daycare) that might be of help, and will share what we can if a closure is announced. We also celebrate this caring community and know that families will reach out to each other for mutual support.

During **Spring Break**, we encourage our families to follow the [safe travel precautions outlined by the Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC) as well as the guidelines to [avoid nonessential travel to countries listed on the CDC website as Level 2 or 3](#). Should your family make the decision to travel to one of the countries on the CDC Level 2 or 3 list, we urge you to heed the recommendation to keep your children at home for 14 days (the length of time for COVID-19 symptoms to develop) following your return.

To promote health and safety in our school, we have:

- Reminded students about the hygiene practices listed below
- Suspended hand-shaking at the morning greeting
- Purchased spray bottles of an EPA-approved disinfectant for teachers to clean surfaces daily
- Reviewed protocols with our cleaning contractor to ensure daily cleaning of surfaces including handrails and door knobs
- Established a Crisis Response Team to monitor the situation and develop detailed contingency plans

As we continue to remind students, the best way to keep coronavirus out of our schools and community is to practice good hygiene:

- *Wash your hands regularly*, especially after using the restroom and before preparing or consuming food. Wash for 20 seconds, using soap and hot water. Be sure to also wash your fingertips.
- *Cover a cough*. Avoid coughing or sneezing into your hands or in the air. Always try to cough or sneeze into a tissue, and then throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, cough/sneeze into your arm.
- *Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose*.
- *If children are feeling sick, please keep them home from school and activities*. Allow them some time to feel better so they do not risk infecting others. Adults also should stay home if they feel unwell.

We will continue to communicate with you and provide updates as new information becomes available and especially if we anticipate an impact on our schools, students or staff. Visit the [Coronavirus Information](#) page on the district website (in Health & Wellness section) for information, resources and an FAQ. For now, I leave you (below) with a post from the President of the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians.

Thank you for working with us for the well-being of our community in these unpredictable circumstances.

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From the President of the MN Academy of Family Physicians:
Posted on March 11, 2020

Fellow Minnesotans:

As news sources continue to announce new cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Minnesota, we know many of you have questions. Be assured, there is a path through this.

While this is a “novel” or a new version of the coronavirus, we’ve been battling other varieties of coronavirus for many years. There will be serious illness in some, and we must take all precautions to decrease COVID-19 spread.

For most healthy people, however, mild cases will have symptoms similar to the common cold. People begin noting symptoms five days after exposure and are sick for a week; then, symptoms start improving. We all know how to take care of mild cases—stay home, drink lots of fluids and curl up in bed for a few days. Things will generally get better with time and rest. If symptoms are worsening, you should re-contact your healthcare provider; otherwise, stay home until symptoms are fully cleared.

Like any new infection, the first round in society is the hardest, and then things start getting better. Testing is more readily available each day; our public health system is hard at work; and, your doctors and nurses are here to support you. With some extra care, most of us can avoid getting sick.

HOW TO STAY HEALTHY & LIMIT SPREAD OF COVID-19

1. Wash your hands. Use soap and water for 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizers that are at least 60% alcohol. Wipe down surfaces that might hold droplets containing the virus.
2. Practice social distancing. This means keeping a six-foot bubble between you and your neighbor to prevent spread, coughing and sneezing into your elbow and avoiding touching public surfaces with your hands. Social distancing means finding creative ways to avoid physical contact with others. Shop at odd hours. Leave space between you and your neighbor at church or on the bus. Avoid shaking hands and hugging. Use waves, jazz hands and big friendly smiles instead of physical touch. Avoid large gatherings in confined spaces.
3. Take caution if you become sick. Whether you have a cold, the flu or suspect coronavirus, it is important to take care of yourself. Your first step should be to call your clinic to ask about next steps. Most healthy folks can treat this at home, with acetaminophen and ibuprofen for fever, lots of rest and lots of fluids. If you’re not seriously ill, then stay home, stay warm and avoid infecting others. Healthcare is just a phone call away—you’ll be more comfortable at home in your pajamas than waiting all day in the emergency room.
4. Support those who are vulnerable. Who does this include? Anyone over age 60, those who have lung problems (these are folks who use an inhaler or have smoked for many years), those who have blood pressure issues and those who have a compromised immune system (like those on chemo or with transplants). These folks may need extra help with coronavirus, just as they do with the flu or a cold. The more severely ill need to be the focus of hospitals, physicians and other healthcare resources. We all have many important folks

in our lives who are vulnerable—let us work together so they have healthcare resources when needed.

Remember, we Minnesotans stand together! We shovel each other out during each winter snowstorm. Instead of responding to COVID-19 with fear, we need to come together to fight this battle as a community. Not by literally coming together (social distancing, remember!), but by supporting and caring for each other. By washing hands whenever touching public surfaces. By calling and checking in on friends and family. By inventing awesome, no-touch secret handshakes with our friends. By dropping off medications, supplies and groceries at the doorsteps of our neighbors who need them. By preventing unnecessary exposures for those at risk by avoiding visiting nursing homes or leaving home when mildly ill. By encouraging others to contact their primary care clinic by phone with any worries or concerns.

As family medicine physicians, we know this community has the capacity to get through this, together. We know how to take care of each other. What can YOU, personally, do to help keep our community and state healthy? The choices each of us make paves the path for the society we are and want to become.

Let us plan AND prepare, NOT panic. Let us be there for each other. Let us choose care, compassion and courage. We can do this Minnesota!

Sincerely,
Renée Crichlow, MD, FAAFP
President, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians