The CDC recommends that travelers avoid non-essential travel to Wuhan, China. Chinese officials have closed transport within and out of Wuhan.

If a person travelled to China in the last 14 days and is sick with fever, cough or difficulty breathing they should:

- Seek medical care right away. Before you go to a doctor’s office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Not travel while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

If a traveler who returns from China is not ill, they may continue to attend school.

What preventive measures should a school take to help reduce the spread of respiratory illness?

NJDOH recommends that schools and childcare settings increase education on respiratory hygiene. Staff and children (as developmentally appropriate) should all be taught and asked to follow these steps that prevent the transmission of respiratory infections:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or into your sleeve, not your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash hands often for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home if you’re sick, especially with a fever.
- Avoid people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.

Additional preventive measures include:

- Adhere to exclusion recommendations from public health. For acute respiratory illness; fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication. Doctors notes for return do not supersede public health recommendation.
- Separate sick students and staff from others until they can be picked up to go home.
- Provide adequate supplies, including clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Encourage routine surface cleaning through education, policy, and the provision of supplies.
- Get a flu shot – it’s not too late to be protected!

School Cleaning Procedures

Special sanitizing processes beyond routine cleaning, including closing schools to clean every surface in the building are not necessary or recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illness. Schools should
follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product. Typically, this means daily sanitizing surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones and toys.

Outbreaks involving novel coronaviruses evolve quickly and recommendations from public health officials may change frequently as new information becomes available. Please check the following websites often for updated information.

For more information:


- New Jersey Department of Health website at https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml
  https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/schoolhealth.shtml
How to talk to your child about coronavirus

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Be careful what you say around children, as anyone who has any or works with them knows — they hear everything.

Lately, much of what they are overhearing is about coronavirus.

The talk has been alarming and scary. People wearing masks, the number of infected people flashing on TV screens and talk of quarantine is frightening.

So, how should parents and educators talk about the issue with children without making them anxious and frightened?

Be honest and keep it simple.

Most children know what a cold is — start there.

"The common cold is also caused by viruses and this is no different in the way that it's spread from person to person," said child psychiatrist Sarabjit Singh.

Talk should focus on washing hands for at least 20 seconds and coughing into the sleeve, not the hand, and maintaining a 3-foot distance," said Singh, who is also executive medical director of behavioral health services at Saint Clare's Health in Morris County, St. Mary's General Hospital in Passaic County and Saint Michael's Medical Center in Essex County.

Watch out for news overload

While it's important not to shut out information or put blindsers on, parents need to be media savvy and watch out for information overload.

"Every time you turn on the TV or go on the Internet things tend to get sensationalized, which creates an alarmist attitude," Singh said. "Often this leaves more questions than answers in the minds of kids."

The anxious brain will always think of the worst-case scenario. That's why it's important to let children know that just because the virus is dominating news coverage that doesn't mean the problem is getting more severe. News coverage can get repetitive.

"It doesn't mean there is a catastrophe. Often it just means that there is no new information," said Singh. "When listening to the news the approach to take for both adults and kids is to ask: Is there anything new coming out?"

Keep it simple

Dinnertime conversation can include simple questions, like "Am I learning anything new today? Am I covering the basics? Am I doing what I am supposed to be doing?" And then leave it at that.

"That should bring some peace," said Singh. Parents should also be mindful of their tone during these conversations.

"It's not just the tone of media, it is also the tone of adults when approaching the topic. We tend to project our worries onto the kids. Our tone needs to be neutral, but we should not avoid conversations like this," Singh said.

Adults should keep calm too

Individuals with preexisting health conditions over 80 years old will need to be more vigilant, this is not a deadly virus for children, said Dr. Robert Lahita, chairman of medicine at St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center in Paterson. Lahita is currently studying the virus and he said it's clear to him that "with very young people there is something that is preventing them from getting very sick."

"In fact there were two newborns infected with the virus who weathered the virus very well," he said.

Lahita, though, said he doesn't want to downplay the seriousness of the virus with adults. He didn't mince words when asked about the spread of the virus.

"Within the next four months, I see this infection going big. There will be lots of communities that will be infected. There will be churches and schools etc., and I think our hospital, Saint Joe's, is going to be very, very busy," Lahita said. As a matter of fact, he said, "all of the hospitals within the state and the City of New York are going to be busy. We are ramping up for this as we speak."

As with the cold or influenza, Lahita said individuals will have different results, depending on their immune system.

"Some people will be asymptomatic," he said, while “others will have the common cold and others will have total respiratory failure." He said 80 percent do not get very sick while14 percent will get "somewhat sick" and 2 percent "will wind up in the hospital."

Even though these numbers are scary, it's better not to keep children in the dark, Lahita said.

Professionals advise against waiting until the virus hits or affects the family before talking to children.

"That kind of attitude, whether it's by caregivers, adults or school systems, always invokes more anxiety," Singh said. "It sends the message that adults are keeping secrets. The more people get educated about an issue the better it becomes. Anxiety in its simplest form as a phenomenon is all about uncertainty."

The bottom line

Dr. Donald Allegra, formerly with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), is now an infectious disease specialist with Saint Clare's Health.

"The CDC warned people a couple of days ago that it would not be a question of if, but when the virus would start spreading. There's a lot of panic out there, but we haven't had any deaths in the United States so far. The panic out there is kind of misplaced," Allegra said.

In the end, this virus acts and spreads much like the common cold, which means you have to be within 6 feet of somebody in order to get it, Allegra said.

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