

Media Release

Thursday, January 30, 2020

Working together to prevent spread of seasonal illness and novel coronavirus

Healthcare partners in our community, including the health unit, hospitals, primary care providers, and Emergency Medicine Services, are working with each other and with the Ministry of Health to ensure residents are protected from the potential spread of the 2019-Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

“The Health Unit has always worked with our local hospitals regarding the implementation of infection prevention and control measures and case and contact management related to reportable diseases,” says Dr. Lynn Noseworthy, Medical Officer of Health for the HKPR District Health Unit. “With the introduction of the novel coronavirus, and Ontario’s identification of it as a new reportable disease, we have heightened our communication to ensure we continue to share the information and resources needed to protect the public’s health.”

At this time of year, there are many respiratory viruses and other illnesses circulating in our community, and the steps to protect yourself from those illnesses are also effective protection against 2019-nCoV.

What is the 2019-nCoV?

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses. They can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe illnesses such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). Human coronaviruses are common throughout the world. In rare cases, animal coronaviruses can evolve and infect people and then spread between people. This was the case with SARS and MERS and with the 2019-nCoV novel coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

How are local healthcare partners prepared?

Although the risk continues to be low, staff from the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit, Northumberland Hills Hospital, Ross Memorial Hospital, Campbellford Memorial Hospital, Haliburton Highlands Health Services and primary care partners have implemented precautionary measures required to ensure the safety of patients, visitors, and health care workers, including thorough symptom and travel screenings.

As a reportable disease, healthcare partners are now required to report a suspected case of the novel coronavirus to their local medical officer of health. If a suspected case of novel coronavirus was to be identified in this area, the Health Unit would work with the Ministry of

Health, Public Health Ontario Laboratory, and local hospitals in the management of the case and potential contacts.

Where can you find the most reliable and up-to-date information?

It's important to check credible sources of information about 2019-nCoV, including daily updates on:

- ontario.ca/coronavirus
- canada.ca/coronavirus

The Health Unit is monitoring the situation and sharing information with its partners and the public through its website. Residents with questions can visit the Health Unit's website at hkpr.on.ca or call 1-866-888-4577.

Flu Season

A number of respiratory illnesses, including some common coronaviruses, are circulating at this time of year and it is peak flu season. Most people with common coronavirus illness will recover on their own. Your health care provider may recommend steps you can take to relieve symptoms.

The best way to protect yourself and others from circulating respiratory illnesses:

- Get your flu shot
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or arm if you don't have a tissue
- Stay home if you or a family member are ill. Avoid visiting people in the hospital or long-term care homes if you are ill.

What to do if feeling ill, with recent travel history to China

Be prepared to identify your travel history and/or potential contact history with novel coronavirus so that paramedics and/or the health care provider are appropriately prepared to assist you.

- Call your local health unit or health care provider if you become sick with a cough and fever **AND** have returned from Hubei province in China in the past 14 days or have had close contact with an ill person who is either under investigation for novel coronavirus or is a confirmed case.

- If you have severe respiratory symptoms, call 911 and explain both your travel history and symptoms to arrange swift and safe transport.

Quotes:

“The health and safety of our patients, residents, clients, staff, volunteers, and community as a whole is a key focus for us, and we continue to work collaboratively with the Health Unit as well as our local and regional health service provider partners to ensure health and safety remain a top priority,” says Carolyn Plummer, CEO of Haliburton Highlands Health Services.

Varouj Eskedjian, CEO of Campbellford Memorial Hospital, added “the heightened awareness and screening measures put in place for the novel coronavirus along with having hospital staff ensuring best infection control measures are practised every day, will help protect staff, patients and the public from influenza and coronavirus.”

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