

Township of West Caldwell



March 3, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We understand that the novel coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, is causing much anxiety in our community, country and the world. The West Caldwell Health Department (WCHD) is working with our schools to provide you with the most up to date information on this rapidly evolving situation. The following is a brief overview of the current situation. For more information and FAQ's, we recommend you visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> or call the NJDOH COVID-19 Hotline at 1-800-222-1222.

What we know

- The virus causing COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified and causes a respiratory illness ranging from a mild cold-like illness to severe pneumonia.
- Most people (including children) diagnosed with COVID-19 in China had mild illness.
- Similar to influenza (the flu), older individuals (>60 years old) and those with other underlying medical conditions are most likely to have severe disease and complications from COVID-19.
- There is no vaccine or treatment currently available for COVID-19.
- Currently, there are NO cases and NO community spread of COVID-19 in Essex County.
- However, WCHD is preparing for when/if this happens.

How the virus spreads

- COVID-19 is believed to spread primarily the same way the common cold or flu spreadstthrough respiratory droplets that are produced when someone coughs or sneezes.
- People who are most at risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 are those who have been in close contact (within about 6 feet) with someone who has the disease.
- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread of the virus might be possible before a person has symptoms, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

What you can do

- Keep children home when they are sick.
 - Students (and parents/guardians) who are ill, especially with acute respiratory symptoms (not allergies or chronic conditions), should stay home.

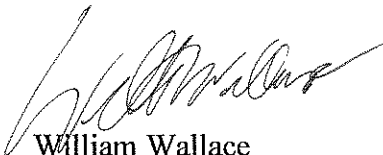
- Teach your children to always cover their cough and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.
- Remind them to wash their hands with soap and water (or use 60% alcohol hand sanitizer) after they touch their face, use the restroom, and before they eat.
- Tell children to avoid touching their mouth and nose since that is how germs get into the body.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (everyday household disinfectants are fine)
 - Enhance cleaning of high touch surfaces like door knobs, toilet handles, and sink handles.
- Plan for when community spread occurs.
 - Ensure you have a plan to designate a caregiver, such as a family member or neighbor, for a sick child(ren) if you can't stay home.
 - Know your child's school plan to communicate with you when needed, such as robocalls, email, or checking their website.

Because most people with COVID-19 have mild disease, the likelihood that WCHD will recommend closing schools is very low. In the unlikely chance that we make the decision to close our school due to a COVID-19 outbreak, it is important for parents/guardians to have a plan for who could take care of your child.

WCHD staff are closely monitoring this evolving situation and will continue to provide new information to the community as things change.

More information can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> or call the NJDOH COVID-19 Hotline at 1-800-222-1222.

Sincerely,



William Wallace
Health Officer