

# CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

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*Briefing Note for CASN Members*

*March 4, 2020*

*CASN Community Health Interest Group*

*“The key to containing this virus is to break the chains of transmission.”  
Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General, February 2020*

The coronavirus is not a crisis in Canada and the risk is low at this point, but the situation is dynamic. The WHO has called on every country to take an all-of-society approach to inform populations, expand surveillance, find, isolate, and care for every case, and trace every contact. Proactive planning is recommended.

## Prevent

Contact and droplet precautions are being implemented. No vaccines are currently available.

### Precaution Measures

- Frequent hand cleaning with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or alternatively, alcohol-based (>60%) hand rub
- Avoid touching face after touching surfaces or sick people
- Clean surfaces such as work desks regularly with disinfectant
- Sneeze and cough into sleeve or a tissue that is discarded immediately into a closed rubbish bin
- Stay at home if feeling unwell and call primary health care provider or local health professional
- If sick, eat and sleep separately from others in the house/apartment, and use separate utensils and cutlery to eat
- Avoid travel to countries identified by the [Government of Canada](#)
- If exposed to the virus, contact the local Public Health organization immediately and self-quarantine for 14 days

### Questions for nursing faculty

- What communication structures are in place to inform faculty, staff, and students about the evolving situation?
- Is mask FIT testing up to date and are existing protocols being followed?
- Are faculty, clinical educators, staff, and students up to date on transmission reduction?
- How can we be proactive about the virus without increasing fear and anxiety?
- Should the focus on infection precautions in curricula be increased?
- Do absence policies need to be revised in light of the virus?
- Are students receiving precautionary measures in their clinical setting?
- Do students have opportunities to practice donning and removing PPE?

## Detect

Typically, symptoms of COVID-19 look like flu and are mild to moderate:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Dry cough
- Headache

However, some people experience

- shortness of breath,
- difficulty breathing, or
- viral pneumonia in both lungs.

As of March 4, 2020, the fatality rate in Wuhan, China is between 2% and 4%. The overall case-fatality rate was 2.3%. No deaths occurred in those aged 9 and younger; those aged 70–79 had an 8% fatality rate, and those aged 80 and older a 14.8% fatality rate.

### Questions for Nursing Faculty

- Are faculty, clinical educators, staff, and students aware of the symptoms?
- Do faculty, clinical educators, staff, and students know whom to contact if they are concerned about symptoms (health info-line, primary health care provider, local public health unit)?
- If the virus does spread locally, can we ensure no group is stigmatised?
- How should institutions support international and out-of-province students who need to self-isolate?

## Respond

If the virus spreads locally, faculty, staff, and students may need to stay home. If social distancing is required, strategies for maintaining educational and learning opportunities are needed.

### Questions for Nursing Faculty

- Can theoretical courses be moved to an online format easily?
- Can evaluations be conducted online?
- Should students go into clinical placements if the virus spreads locally?
- How will decisions be made about clinical courses and social distancing measures?
- How will such decisions be communicated to faculty, staff, and students?
- What support structures need to be in place?
- What steps are needed for faculty and staff to maintain operations at a distance?

## Websites of Interest

- [Government of Canada, Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Outbreak update](#)
- [Government of Canada, Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): For health professionals](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control Canada, Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [World Health Organization Situation Report 42](#)
- [Santé et Services sociaux, Québec – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)