

SARS Message for School Boards and Schools

School Boards and Schools are advised to direct enquiries about SARS to their Public Health or Community Health Centers. The following is a summary of recommendations for Schools from the Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer and a listing of helpful web sites.

Recently, the World Health Organization has received reports of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), from various parts of the world. The main symptoms include fever, dry cough, shortness of breath or breathing difficulties. At this time, the cause of the illness remains unknown. Health Canada is monitoring confirmed reports of outbreaks of SARS in China (Guangdong Province and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Vietnam (City of Hanoi) and Singapore, and the occurrence of isolated cases in other countries.

Individuals may be concerned regarding students and staff returning from abroad. Students and staff who have traveled to the affected areas in Asia and who have not been in contact with a person with SARS can attend school.

Recommendations:

- Individuals should be reminded to practice good personal hygiene (e.g., good hand-washing practices). Hand washing is the single most important procedure for preventing infections.
- Individuals who have traveled to high-risk sites in China (Guangdong Province and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Vietnam (City of Hanoi) and Singapore during spring break should monitor their health for 10 days following their departure from these areas, but may attend school and work. If they don't have any symptoms.
- Should a fever over 38.0°C (100.4 °F), and one or more of the following respiratory symptoms: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing occur, medical advice should be sought as soon as possible.
- The person should not be attending school until evaluated and cleared by public health officials.
- The individual or parent should contact their public/community health center, or their family physician by phone prior to going for assessment.
- Travelers should inform their health care worker when and where they traveled, and indicate whether there was contact with someone who had these symptoms.

The following websites have frequently updated information on SARS:

www.hltthss.gov.nt.ca NWT Department of Health and Social Services
www.who.int/csr/sars World Health Organization
www.sars.gc.ca Health Canada