



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**

Oxiris Barbot, MD  
*Commissioner*

February 2020

Dear Families:

Recently, a novel (new) coronavirus was detected in thousands of people worldwide, primarily in China. A "novel coronavirus" is a strain that has not been previously found in humans. This novel coronavirus can lead to fever, cough and shortness of breath.

The City is monitoring the outbreak closely and working with our partners at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). At this time, the NYC Department of Education (DOE) is not authorizing school-sponsored travel to China. Local field trips will go on as planned.

Please be reassured that there is no need for alarm or to change daily routines in any way. The City is closely monitoring the situation, and all New Yorkers are advised to follow the same precautions they normally would in cold and flu season. Please see the recommendations below:

**Students and staff with NO recent travel from China:**

Everyone should go about their daily lives and not panic, but practice the same precautions you do during cold and flu season:

- If not already vaccinated — get your flu shot.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when sneezing or coughing.
- Wash your hands with soap and water often — use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home if you have a fever or are feeling sick.

Some students may come to school wearing face masks. The CDC does not recommend the use of face masks among healthy individuals. However, they are permitted. If the face mask becomes a distraction in the classroom or school community, school staff may ask students to remove them.

**Students and school staff with recent travel from China:**

The federal government has issued a requirement for up to 14 days of either mandatory quarantine or home isolation (depending on travel areas in China) for individuals who left China after 5pm EST February 2, 2020. This means that those individuals should NOT report to work or school for up to 14 days from the date that they departed China.

Students and staff who left China before 5pm EST February 2, 2020, and who have no symptoms of illness, may return to school immediately.

Anyone who has left China in the last two weeks and has a fever or a cough or shortness of breath should call their medical provider and report their symptoms and travel history. They should not come to school until they have been evaluated by a doctor and told they are no longer sick.

With the best public health system in the world, New York City stands ready to respond to any confirmed cases of the coronavirus. We urge all New Yorkers to remain vigilant, and if you or anyone you know matches the criteria and have recently traveled to the affected areas of China, please see a medical professional.

To learn more, visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/health/coronavirus).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Oxiris Barbot MD".

Oxiris Barbot, MD  
Commissioner  
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene