

**December 10, 2020**

**RE: Potential COVID-19 exposure to students and staff of Skeena Middle School, Terrace, in attendance December 4<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020.**

Northern Health Authority has informed the Principal of Skeena Middle School that students and staff may have been in contact with a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19 on December 4<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Every school in BC has a COVID-19 safety plan in place. In this circumstance, the safety plan was followed precisely - and because of this, the risk of additional cases is very low. We recognize that learning of a potential exposure to COVID-19 may cause concern for families, and we hope to address some of those concerns with the following information.

COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets, when a person who is infected coughs or sneezes. If you are in close contact with an infected person, the virus can enter the body if droplets get into the eyes, nose or throat. It can also be spread when a healthy person touches an object or surface (e.g. a doorknob or a table) with the virus on it, and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes before washing their hands.

Exposure to a confirmed case does not mean you or your child will become sick with COVID-19. COVID-19 has a very low infection rate in children, and most are not at high risk. We expect to see COVID-19 cases in various community settings, including school settings, but we expect the risk of transmission in school to be low in most circumstances. The risk of transmission becomes more significant if someone is considered a close contact.

NH public health staff follows up directly with anyone who is identified as a **close contact** of a lab confirmed case. It is important to note that a close contact is a person who has been in direct, face-to-face contact for prolonged periods of time with an infectious case. People with COVID-19 are considered contagious (infectious) from 48 hours before onset of their symptoms (before they may realize they are sick), up until 10 days after their symptoms began. More information on the definition of a high-risk close contact, can be found here: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/case-definitions/covid-19-\(novel-coronavirus\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/case-definitions/covid-19-(novel-coronavirus))

If you or your child has no symptoms and you have not been informed personally by public health that they are a close contact and should self-isolate – you and your children are not required to self-isolate. However, please take extra care to monitor your child/children for symptoms until **December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 midnight** (which is 14 days from the last date of possible contact with the confirmed case). Testing is not recommended or needed if you or your child has no symptoms because it is not accurate or useful when a person has no symptoms. If you or your child develops symptoms, a health assessment is recommended via your primary care provider or by calling Northern Health's COVID-19 Information Line and Online Clinic at 1-844-645-7811.

If you are identified as a close contact, you will be contacted directly by public health, and supported in any actions you need to take (such as self-monitoring, or self-isolation). If you are not identified as a close contact you will not be contacted directly, as the risk of infection is very low.

That said, everyone is encouraged to monitor yourself and your children for symptoms. Testing is available for anyone with COVID-19 symptoms, however mild. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough or worsening of chronic cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Muscle aches

While less common, symptoms can also include:

- Stuffy nose
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Dizziness, confusion
- Abdominal pain
- Skin rashes or discoloration of fingers or toes.

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/symptoms>

**If you or your child have symptoms, please call your Primary Care Provider or the Northern Health Virtual Clinic for an assessment and testing: 1-844-645-7811**

If you or your child has symptoms, please see Appendix C in [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings](#) to determine if your child can go to school with those symptoms.

There are many things you can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your community. Please visit the BCCDC website for more information: [www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca).

Sincerely,



Dr. Raina Fumerton, MD, MPH, FRCPC  
Medical Health Officer, Northwest HSDA  
**Northern Health**