

# Coronavirus: What You Need To Know

## Frequently Asked Questions\*

**Q1: What is the coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are not new. Like influenza, coronaviruses are a family of respiratory viruses with multiple strains. These strains have the ability to change over time, just like influenza. Coronaviruses are already common in the U.S. and have been for years.

**Q2: What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus that has not been previously identified. It is a respiratory illness that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019. As of March 11, the World Health Organization has classified COVID-19 as a pandemic.

**Q3: What is a pandemic?**

According to the CDC, a pandemic is “an epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.” It does not mean that the disease has become more dangerous than it already is or that your personal risk of contracting the disease has increased. For the majority of people, the immediate risk continues to be low. The most vulnerable populations continue to be elderly people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions (ex. heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes).

**Q4: How is the COVID-19 transmitted?**

Just like the flu and common cold, COVID-19 is spread person to person through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible for a person to contract COVID-19 by touching a surface or object where the virus is present and then touching their mouth or nose, and possibly their eyes. However, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

**Q5: How can I help protect myself?**

The CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a 60% or higher alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Stay hydrated, eat nutritious foods, and get plenty of rest.
- For more vulnerable populations, consider avoiding large social gatherings.

**Q6: What are the symptoms that COVID-19 can cause?**

Current symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.

**Q7: Should I cancel travel plans?**

If you have upcoming travel planned for Spring Break or later this spring, please refer to the CDC Travel Advisory webpage.

**Q8: What is the Groton Central School District doing to prepare for COVID-19?**

We are planning and preparing, as per guidance from federal, state, and local authorities. Specifically, the GCSD is:

- reviewing, revising, and implementing our Safety Plan with input from officials from both the Town and Village of Groton;
- staying in close communication with the Tompkins County Health Department (TCHD) and other educational institutions;
- monitoring and planning for student and staff absences;
- continuing our current procedures for students and staff who are sick at school (schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19);
- continuing our cleaning protocols, and reminding staff of these protocols;
- enacting a daily sanitizing of all student work surfaces in the classrooms, including door handles, desks/tables, and chairs, as well as an air fumigation procedure in the evenings in both buildings;
- enacting a daily sanitizing protocol on all school busses;
- suspending all field trips outside of NY state, as well as sites within NY state that have been identified as epicenters for COVID-19 (ex. Westchester County);
- encouraging students and staff to wash their hands and to utilize hand sanitizer when unable to wash their hands; and
- working to communicate often through the district website and Facebook page.

**Q9: Can schools release the names of students exhibiting symptoms similar to those of COVID-19 to local departments of health?**

In an emergency, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) authorizes school officials to disclose education records, without consent, to appropriate parties in connection to the emergency, if knowledge of that information is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or other individuals. See [34 CFR Part 99](#).

**Q10: Who can close schools?**

The decision to close schools rests in the first instance with the local board of education or superintendent of schools, in consultation with local health authorities.

Schools will be required to follow requests of the local health department and county emergency managers, as well as any emergency declarations issued by the Governor. The NYS Commissioner of Education also has the authority to close schools under extraordinary circumstances, in which local school officials do not take action deemed

appropriate by State and/or county emergency personnel in accordance with the county or state emergency preparedness plans or directives.

**Q11: Does Groton have a continuity plan related to instruction should the district close for an extended period of time?**

All faculty at Groton CSD have prepared five days of lessons for students should the district be closed. In addition, the district has a continuity plan for instruction beyond the five days that includes both digital and mail-based instructional tools and resources. The district will be sharing details of the plan if and when we need to enact it.

**Q12: Where can I get updated information on COVID-19 cases in New York?**

You can get updated information on the number of cases in New York State through the NYS Department of Health website at [Health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/](https://health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/).

***\* The following are sources of information for this document:***

Tompkins County Health Department, NYS Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO)