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Harris County  
**Public Health**  
Building a Healthy Community

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Dear Parent:

As you may have seen on the news, there is a new (novel) coronavirus disease causing an outbreak of respiratory illness (COVID-19) around the world. Although there are confirmed cases in the United States, there are currently no confirmed cases of coronavirus disease in Harris County.

Harris County Public Health (HCPH) is working closely with partners to monitor the situation and the health risk from COVID-19 is considered low for Harris County residents (and the US). HCPH will promptly report any confirmed cases in our jurisdiction, if they occur.

It is the season for flu and other common respiratory illnesses. COVID-19 is believed to be spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes, much in the way the flu and other respiratory viruses are spread. You and your children can help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses with these actions:

- Stay home when you are sick and avoid contact with others to avoid getting them sick.
- Everyone 6 months and older is encouraged to get a flu shot.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (sing happy birthday song twice). If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who 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.

If you or anyone in your family has had close contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 or has recently traveled and returned from China, or an area with coronavirus disease and within 14 days of returning feels sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, please immediately self-isolate, call your healthcare provider, and report to HCPH, Surveillance and Epidemiology Unit at 713-439-6000 or 713-755-5050 if after hours.

For the latest information on novel coronavirus including symptoms, transmission, evaluation recommendations, and travel alert, please visit Harris County Public Health's website at [www.hcphtx.org/nCOV](http://www.hcphtx.org/nCOV) or call us at 713-439-6000. You can also visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for the CDC's latest updates.

Sincerely,

Sherri Onyiego, MD, PhD  
Medical Director  
Nutrition and Chronic Disease Prevention Division

*HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.*

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