March 3, 2020

Dear Parents,

Over the last few weeks, we have had reports of flu amongst our students and staff. Additionally, the CDC has announced we may be facing increased cases of COVID-19 “coronavirus” in the United States and specifically in New York City. According to the CDC, current understanding about how the virus that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) spreads is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses. COVID-19 is a new disease and there is more to learn about how it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, and to what extent it may spread in the United States.

**Talking to your children about COVID-19:**

At school, we are noticing an increase in questions about and discussions between students related to COVID-19. Given the significant increase in media coverage, this is to be expected and we, at school, and you, at home, need to support the students and appropriately quell related worries that they may be experiencing. Here are a few suggestions for supporting your children if they have questions or are expressing fears about the virus:

*Listen to Your Child:* If your child has questions or you sense they are feeling increased worry, make time to listen and talk. Find out what they may have heard. Help to educate them in age-appropriate ways and dispel untruths. Let your child know that you are taking their thoughts and ideas seriously.

*Remain Calm:* Keep to your normal routine as much as possible. You are a model for your child. If you are displaying a great deal of anxiety about COVID-19, they will likely feel the same way. Make sure your child knows that many experts are working to keep them and everyone around them safe. Let your child know about the precautions they should be taking, such as handwashing, not touching their face, and coughing into their elbow – knowing that they can take proactive steps can be empowering.

*Keep Yourself Informed:* As a parent, make sure that you have correct information to share. If your child asks you something that you can’t answer, look up the information together or admit that you don’t know and that you will get back to them.

*Ask for Help:* If you are concerned about how much your child may be worrying about COVID-19 please reach out to someone at Collegiate for help. Or, if you don’t know how to respond to a question, we can help, as well.

**Useful COVID-19 Facts:**

*Person-to-person spread:* The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
Between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet).
Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

**Spread from contact with infected surfaces or objects:**

- It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

**Can someone spread the virus without being sick?**

- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this occurring with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

**How easily does the virus spread?**

- How easily a virus spreads from person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious (spread easily), like measles, while other viruses do not spread as easily.
- The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community (“community spread”) in some affected geographic areas. Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

**Collegiate’s Current Infection Control Practices:**

- Handwashing reminder signs are posted in all bathrooms.
- A Flu Vaccine Fact Sheet for parents is posted on the Parent Board.
- All hard surfaces throughout the school are cleaned twice a day.
- Alcohol hand sanitizers are placed in high traffic areas especially at each elevator bank area and upon entrance to the school.
- Teachers are reminding all students to wash their hands throughout the day.
- Changing our traditional morning “fist-bump” to a hand wave.
- Students will be discouraged to hold hands.
- Students encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer upon entrance to school, prior to meals/snacks, after bathroom usage, after coughing/sneezing or blowing their nose, when hands are visibly dirty, and upon return to home.
- Ill students are assessed by the nurse and appropriate care is provided.

**Additional Recommended Precautions:**

- Keep your children home from school if they are sick with one or more of the following symptoms:
  - Fever of 100.0 degrees or higher
  - Painful sore throat
  - Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Uncontrolled cough
- Shortness of breath
- Uncontrolled runny nose
- Suspicious rash
- Irritated eyes

- Vaccinate yourself and your children against the flu.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your cough: cough or sneeze into a tissue, your elbow or upper sleeve.
- Face masks are only necessary if you are sick yourself and do not want to spread your illness to others.


Please have your children well-rested, nourished, and energized for school and please email Alethea Almedina, Rosalina Medrano, or Kate Ostrander with any reports of illness. As always, please contact the school if you have any questions.

Many thanks for your cooperation,

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