**PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF ILLNESS IN SCHOOLS**

Schools are great places for children to learn and connect with others. We also know when students spend time together, it’s easier for germs to spread. That’s why it’s important for students, staff, and families to help stop the spread of illness in our school communities. Here are some simple ways to keep our schools healthy:

* **Wash hands often –** especially after using the toilet, before eating and after coughing or sneezing.
* **Check how you feel before going to school**
* Do I feel too sick to join in regular school activities?
* **Stay home when sick.**

If you answered yes to the previous question, generally it is recommended that you stay home until you feel well enough to join in school activities again. However, sometimes a healthcare provider or Public Health may ask those experiencing certain illnesses to stay home longer.

If someone starts feeling unwell at school, they should go home and rest until their symptoms have improved or for as long as advised by a health care provider / public health.

* **Practice respiratory etiquette.**
* Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue, then wash your hands right away.
* Try to not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
* Avoid sharing food, drinks, or unwashed utensils.
* Wearing a mask is a personal choice. Everyone’s choice should be respected.
* **Regularly clean surfaces** – clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched a lot (e.g. doorknobs, desks) and soiled items.
* **Get vaccinated** – it’s a good idea for students and staff to stay up to date on all recommended vaccines to help protect against diseases.

Most illnesses experienced by students and staff can be managed through the above general precautions. When certain illnesses are identified in the school setting (e.g. reportable and/or vaccine-preventable diseases), Island Health - Public Health will guide schools on taking any additional steps to prevent further spread and protect against severe illness.

For more information:

* BCCDC - [Quick Guide to Common Childhood Diseases](http://www.bccdc.ca/schools/Documents/EN_Guide_Childhood_Diseases.pdf)
* B.C. Government – [Communicable Disease Prevention in K-12 Schools](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/communicable-disease-prevention-in-k-12-schools)
* [HealthLink BC](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/) or call 8-1-1