

13th March 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians

The media saturation on the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus), has prompted a follow-up communication to yesterday's newsletter. My intention is to provide regular communication to keep our community informed. I do want to reiterate that the priority at Damascus College is the health and safety of our school community.

We are being provided with the latest advice from the Australian and Victorian Chief Medical Officers through the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd to ensure that our school practices assist in keeping our school community safe from the outbreak.

Any incidents that arise will be addressed in accordance with our Critical Incident and Emergency Management Plan. We also have access to resources and support from Catholic Education Melbourne and the Department of Health and Human Services.

As parents, you have a critical role in helping the school manage this situation:

- exercise good judgment by keeping young people home if they are feeling unwell for any reason,
- talk to young people about the situation, as they may be feeling anxious or stressed. You have a key role in helping students feel prepared and safe, and
- encourage young people to be proactive and committed to their schoolwork, and to stay connected with the school and their teachers.

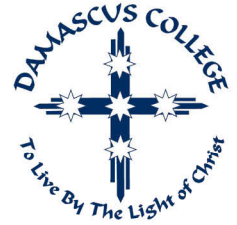
We have been discussing with students in TA that Damascus is following the advice of the best health professionals and that hygiene precautions provide the best protection.

We have reiterated with students to:

- practice good sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses,
- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet,
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser where available,
- if unwell, talk with parents and caregivers about avoiding contact with others (staying home) and gaining medical advice, and
- talk with your TA/Parents/ Caregivers/Teachers if you are feeling alarmed or anxious.

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The Department of Health and Human Services has a number of resources on its website, which explain the virus, detail risk-reduction practices and behaviours, and answer frequently asked questions. These are available at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus.

You can also find information about Catholic education's response at <http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Coronavirus-information-for-parents>.

Some of the common questions I am receiving relate to;

What will happen if someone in the Damascus community has a confirmed case of COVID19?

On the Advice of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, we will use our regular channels of communication to advise there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 among a student or staff member, and that Victoria's Chief Health Officer recommends the school's closure for 24 hours. Students and staff will be advised to stay home and self-isolate for 24 hours. This closure will support school and health officials to work through a contact and containment strategy, including decisions about extending the closure period. It is reasonable to expect that were this to occur; it would be on very short notice.

Will COVID19 affect the continuity of learning and teaching at Damascus College?

I am aware of concerns about the disruption to teaching and learning, especially among families of students in Year 12. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, which is responsible for the VCE, is aware of the situation and has advised that it will work with schools to ensure continuity of learning for all students.

The College is working on a process to best support the continuity of learning.

How would I know if I had COVID 19 (Coronavirus)?

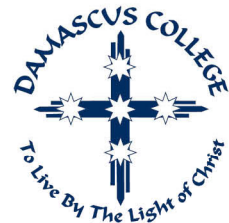
Please refer to the attached graphic on symptoms and courses of action.

There are a number of school events and excursions planned, will they go ahead?

At this stage, we are proceeding with events and excursion on the advice that it is safe for us to do so. This situation is subject to change on a daily basis, and we will advise families accordingly.

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I have international travel planned.

The Australian Government has updated travel restrictions this week.

The extension to existing travel restrictions now applies to visitors from South Korea, Iran and mainland China. Visitors who are not Australian citizens or permanent residents, or their dependants, will not be allowed entry into Australia.

The Government has also advised that visitors from Italy will be subject to enhanced health screening and temperature testing arrangements.

If you are an Australian citizen or permanent resident and are returning from South Korea, Iran, mainland China or Italy, it would be expected that you would not return to Damascus until the two-week self-isolation period has expired.

It would be expected that community members who travel through high-risk areas as stipulated by the Australian Government would observe the appropriate periods of self-isolation prior to returning to school. It is likely that the countries on this list are subject to change.

If you are unsure if your travel places the community at risk, please consult your GP.

See below graphics of elements related to COVID-19 that may assist.

This is an evolving situation, but we will keep you updated as things change.

Thank you for your support as we work to keep our students safe.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Byrne
Principal

KNOW YOUR SYMPTOMS

CORONAVIRUS

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing
- Symptoms appear 2-14 days after exposure

FLU

- Fever
- Cough
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue & weakness
- Chills & sweats
- Congestion
- Sore throat

ALLERGIES

- Sneezing
- Itchy nose, eyes or roof of the mouth
- Runny, stuffy nose
- Watery, red or swollen eyes

SOURCE: MAYO CLINIC

Preventive measures for

FLU + COVID-19



Washing your hands is the best protection:

Wash often

- Use soap and water
- Wash for at least 20 seconds

Use hand sanitizer

- Alcohol-based
- When washing is not an option



Avoid close contact:

With people who are sick or may appear under the weather

Stay home when you are sick. Do not expose others.



Face masks:

Those showing symptoms of these diseases **should wear a mask** to help prevent the spread of the disease.

Wearing a mask is not recommended for those who are well, it will not protect you.



Cover your cough or sneeze:

Use a tissue then

- Trash the tissue
- Wash your hands

Into your elbow

- When a tissue is not available



Clean and disinfect often:

With a household cleaning product, wipe

- Frequently touched objects
- Regularly used surfaces



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What you need to know about

COVID-19



If you have not traveled to an area where COVID-19 is prevalent or been in close contact with a traveler, and you develop respiratory symptoms, it remains likely that you have a seasonal illness like the flu rather than COVID-19.



The steps to protect yourself from COVID-19 are generally the same as those for the flu.



The vast majority of people who contract COVID-19 will not require hospitalization; symptoms are often mild enough that one can recover at home.



You only need to seek medical care if you develop life-threatening conditions like severe shortness of breath, changes in mental status, severe dehydration, or other complications.

> Contact your provider for more advice and call ahead if you plan to seek medical care.

