



ASSIST

AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL SCIENCE
INFORMATION SUPPORT FOR
TEACHERS AND TECHNICIANS

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Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Posted by Anonymous on Fri, 2020-03-20 17:24

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: Science ASSIST continues to provide online support to school science and is closely monitoring updates regarding COVID-19. The Science ASSIST Q&A function will continue to operate, and all website resources are available online. As from Monday 23rd March the ASTA staff are working remotely.

Voting:



No votes yet

Year Level:

Foundation

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Senior Secondary

Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

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Answer by labsupport on question Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Submitted by sat on 20 March 2020

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has advice for schools including the following:

Schools should implement a range of other strategies to reduce transmission, including the promotion of personal hygiene measures (frequent handwashing, reducing face-to-face contact, cough etiquette), physical distancing, reducing public gatherings (e.g. face-to-face school assemblies), and reducing the mixing of students (e.g. reduced use of common areas, staggered lunchtimes, and reduced after-school activities and inter-school activities).¹

Updates from the Australian Government Department of Health regarding COVID-19 can be found at <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

For the Latest statements from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) on coronavirus (COVID-19), see <https://www.health.gov.au/news/latest-statements-from-the-australian-hea...> [Edited 26/03/2020]

Schools and COVID-19

At this stage schools are still open and in the current situation with COVID-19, schools should adopt a risk management approach for practical activities.

It is important to take into consideration that some staff and/or students may be at higher risk of serious infection from the coronavirus disease including those that have compromised immune systems and staff members over 60 years of age.

Schools work at a frenetic pace, but time should be allocated to ensure particular attention is given to the advice provided by the Australian Government Department of Health.

This involves following guidance by the Department of Health encouraging the adherence by staff and students to maintain good hygiene and social distancing, including but not limited to:

- Frequent and thorough handwashing
- Avoiding touching the face particularly near and around the mouth, eyes and nose
- Maintaining a distance of 1.5m where possible
- Regular cleaning of frequently touched objects and surfaces

School science activities and COVID-19

School science activities have additional aspects to consider such as the use of shared safety

glasses, (and shared microscopes), unpredictable student behaviour and students working in close proximity to collaborate on activities. Schools should have strategies to address these aspects in particular:

- The scrupulous cleaning of shared safety glasses (microscopes) between use, see Should shared safety glasses be decontaminated after each use?
 - Note that it is impractical for the science technician to be responsible for this task
 - It would be reasonable for the school to ensure that other systems are in place, e.g. for students to be responsible for cleaning their safety glasses
- Regular cleaning of surfaces
- Good classroom management of student behaviour
- Constructing activities to enable maintaining as much distance as possible between people
- Encouraging the washing of hands at the completion of the activity with soap and water, see 'How to wash and dry hands', ²

Schools should assess their ability to adequately manage each of the above and if it is not possible to meet these requirements then schools should err on the side of caution and not proceed with a particular activity as a student activity. It may be better in these circumstances to conduct a demonstration, so that good hygiene and social distancing can be maintained.

References and further reading

[1] 'Latest statement from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) on coronavirus (COVID-19)', Australian Government Department of Health website, <https://www.health.gov.au/news/latest-statement-from-the-australian-heal...>

² 'How to wash and dry hands', Australian Government Department of Health website, <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/how-to-wash-and-dry-hands> (a pdf version is available on this page)

'Coronavirus (COVID-19) health alert', Australian Government Department of Health website, <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

'Safe Practical Activities in School Science', Australian Science Teachers Association website. https://asta.edu.au/about/safe_practical_activities_in_school_science

'What you need to know about coronavirus (COVID-19) - Good hygiene for COVID-19', Australian Government Department of Health website, <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov...>

'What you need to know about coronavirus (COVID-19) - How it spreads', Australian Government Department of Health website, <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov...>