



TOWN OF BEDFORD
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BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730

Bedford Public Schools Update on COVID-19

May 8, 2020

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The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met May 8, 2020 to review the latest guidance from the Department of Public Health (DPH), the office of Governor Charlie Baker, and Town Legal Counsel.

The COVID-19 Task Force is comprised of the following Town officials:

Sarah Stanton, Town Manager
Jon Sills, Superintendent of Schools
Heidi Porter, Director of Health and Human Services
Robert Bongiorno, Police Chief
David Grunes, Fire Chief
Taissir Alani, Facilities Director

Current Case Report

As of today, May 8, 2020, there have been a total of one hundred fifty-three (153) positive cases of COVID-19 reported to the Town of Bedford Board of Health by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH) and twenty-seven (27) deaths of Bedford residents attributed to COVID-19. The total case number includes residents of the Town of Bedford, including but not limited to those in: single-family homes, apartments, the VA campus, Hanscom Air Force Base, special needs group homes and any and all other larger assisted living/care facilities in Bedford as reported to us by the MA DPH.

As you may be aware, long term care facilities serving the elderly and congregate care facilities, house susceptible populations with underlying conditions who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Increased testing occurs at these facilities and results in more positive cases being identified. As such, cities and towns with these facilities, like Bedford, experience elevated positive case counts and, unfortunately, deaths due to the vulnerability to COVID-19 of the populations within those facilities.

Thirty-six (36) of the total Bedford cases have already recovered and have come off of isolation and there are currently no known Persons Under Investigation. There are other individuals impacted by COVID-19 in the community that have not sought medical attention, and/or have not been tested and are isolating at home regardless. Those individuals do not appear on the surveillance reports the Town receives from the MA DPH.

The Board of Health continues to do the appropriate follow-up and outreach to those residents and close contacts known to us and the VA is conducting follow-up and contact tracing of the Veteran's under their care. Many of the identified close contacts of some of the Bedford cases never exhibited symptoms, have completed their required quarantine period and have been released from quarantine by the Board of Health.

Please note, in part to alleviate the community concern, the VA does do a daily report of their numbers, which includes inpatients, outpatients and staff, many of whom do not call Bedford home. The information can be found here: <https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/Healthcare/COVID19NationalSummary>

Important Updates

Mask and Face Covering Order

All residents over the age of two are required to use a face covering or mask in public places where maintaining proper social distancing measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are not possible. This order applies to all workers and customers of businesses and other organizations that are currently open to the public and permitted to operate as COVID-19 Essential Businesses, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and other retail stores. Residents are also required to wear a mask or face covering at all times when using any means of transportation service or public mass transit.

This order also applies outdoors if you cannot keep a safe distance from others. In practice, this means that, even if you are seeking some fresh air or exercise by going outside for a walk, run or bike ride in a place where you don't expect to see anyone else, you still need to wear a face covering. You can keep it around your neck if no one is around. But when you see someone else you should raise your face covering up over your nose and mouth while you are in the same vicinity. Navigate to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtUJPizQVPI&feature=youtu.be> to See New DPH PSA on How to Safely Cover Your Face Outside of Home.

Stay At Home Advisory is STILL in effect

Wearing a face covering does not make it OK to gather and/or socialize with others. This action is meant to protect others from your respiratory droplets when you must leave your home for necessary errands and activities. Remember people may have the virus and be asymptomatic and contagious all at the same time. Staying home and avoiding close contact with others is still the BEST and most protective option to slow the spread of COVID-19.

With the Warmer Weather Residents Are Outside... and Ticks are, Too!

Spending more time at home during the COVID-19 outbreak and Stay at Home Order is leading residents in search of fresh air and outdoor activities while continuing to maintain social distancing. The Bedford Board of Health wants to remind residents that tick season is upon us and with the nice weather and stay-at-home advisory many people are spending more time in potential tick environments.

You don't have to be walking in the woods to be bitten by a tick; it can happen around your own home while gardening or picking up leaves or while out on a socially distanced walk on Bedford trails and grassy areas. Whereas spring is a popular time for spring clean-up in many backyards, please be mindful that ticks can also be hiding under leaf litter that may have accumulated over the winter.

Taking personal precautions against tick bites should be taken anytime you enter a potential tick environment such as your backyard, while doing yard work, in a grassy area, wooded area or a hiking/walking trail.

- Reduce your chances of getting bitten by following these steps:

- Use an EPA approved insect repellent, like one containing DEET, picaridin, or IR3535 directly on skin for protection that lasts a few hours.
- Treat your clothing and shoes with Permethrin which can kill ticks upon contact. Permethrin is not to be used directly on skin.
- When out in a recreational environment, stay in the center of trails and avoid areas of overgrown bush or grass.
- Wear light colored clothing so ticks can easily be seen.
- Do a Tick Check. Check yourself, children, and pets for ticks daily and shower after returning indoors. Your fingertips are a good detector of ticks that may be on portions of your body that you cannot readily see.
- When you return home from being outside in a potential tick environment, place your clothes in a hot clothes dryer for 15 minutes (do not wash first).
- Check dogs and cats for ticks frequently, and ask your veterinarian about tick preventives
If you do find a tick, you need to remove it promptly.
- Use tweezers to grab the tick's mouth at the surface of the skin.
- Gently pull the tick straight out with a steady motion.
- Clean the area.
- Do not squeeze the tick.
- Clean the area with antiseptic and wash hands afterwards.
- Call your doctor if you get a rash, fever or flu-like symptoms after a tick bite

For more information, contact the Bedford Board of Health at 781-275-6507 or visit their website www.bedfordma.gov/health for tick bite prevention and COVID-19 information.