



Town of Easton, Massachusetts

Department of Health and Community Services

COVID-19 FAQ

WHAT IS COVID 19?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. [Click here to learn more.](#)

WHAT IS A CORONAVIRUS?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID 19?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Around 1 out of every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness. In some cases, COVID-19 can be fatal.

People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention. Call 211 for general COVID-19 information if you are not sick. Call your primary care or medical provider for individualized medical concerns, including telling your doctor about recent travel history, your symptoms, and any potential exposure to COVID-19. If you are experiencing an emergency, call 911.

HOW DOES COVID 19 SPREAD?

Covid-19 is a new disease and we are still learning how it spreads. People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to practice social distancing, including for younger or healthy populations without underlying medical conditions, to reduce the risk of spread to older and more vulnerable individuals. [Click here to learn more about COVID-19 transmission from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\).](#)

CAN SOMEONE SPREAD THE VIRUS WITHOUT BEING SICK?

People are thought to be the most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Current public health data suggests that COVID-19 may be spread 24-48 hours before you are

showing any symptoms. This again reinforces how important it is to observe public health guidelines to protect those most vulnerable even if you are not feeling sick.

HOW ARE COVID-19 AND INFLUENZA VIRUSES DIFFERENT?

Mortality for COVID-19 appears to be higher than that for influenza, especially seasonal influenza. While the true mortality of COVID-19 will take some time to fully understand, the data we have so far indicates that the mortality ratio is between 3-4%. For Seasonal Influenza, mortality is usually well below 0.1%. [For current global COVID-19 infection and death data please view the World Health Organization's COVID-19 situation dashboard.](#)

WHAT IS SOCIAL DISTANCING?

Social distancing means remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet) from others. Congregate settings are crowded places where close contact with others may occur, such as shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums, and places of worship. Recent school closings are meant to promote social distancing.

WHAT IF I THINK I HAVE SYMPTOMS TO COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever (100.3 degrees or higher), cough or difficulty breathing. [If you think you have symptoms of COVID-19 call your healthcare provider for medical advice and to discuss next steps.](#) It is important to call before you leave your home. [Massachusetts 211 is staffed with Community Information Specialists specially trained to answer questions related to COVID-19 in 150 languages, 24 hours per day.](#)

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO SOMEONE WITH COVID-19?

Current state and local health protocols require that public health officials investigate any and all possible close contacts between the general public and a presumptive positive individual who is in isolation. If that information indicates that someone may have come into close contact with a presumptive positive individual, that close contact individual will be directly notified and contacted by state or local public health officials, and they may be ordered to proactively quarantine themselves even if they do not have symptoms, in order to mitigate the possible spread of COVID-19.

WHAT IS A CLOSE CONTACT?

A close contact is defined by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health as a person who has had contact with a confirmed case for 15 or more minutes, within a 6 foot space. This includes household contacts and can include friends and co-workers. Casual encounters such as voting, pumping gas, or passing in line are not considered close contacts.

WHO IS AT HIGHER RISK FOR SERIOUS ILLNESS FROM COVID-19?

While we are still learning about how COVID-2019 affects people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions appear to develop serious illness more often than others. Underlying medical conditions that may increase risk of serious COVID-19 for *individuals of any age* include:

Blood disorders (e.g., sickle cell disease or on blood thinners)

Chronic kidney disease as defined by your doctor. Patient has been told to avoid or reduce the dose of medications because kidney disease, or is under treatment for kidney disease, including receiving dialysis

Chronic liver disease as defined by your doctor. (e.g., cirrhosis, chronic hepatitis) Patient has been told to avoid or reduce the dose of medications because liver disease or is under treatment for liver disease.

Compromised immune system (immunosuppression) (e.g., seeing a doctor for cancer and treatment such as chemotherapy or radiation, received an organ or bone marrow transplant, taking high doses of corticosteroids or other immunosuppressant medications, HIV or AIDS)

Current or recent pregnancy in the last two weeks

Endocrine disorders (e.g., ***diabetes mellitus***)

Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)

Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)

Lung disease including ***asthma*** or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (chronic bronchitis or emphysema) or other chronic conditions associated with impaired lung function or that require home oxygen

Neurological and neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions [including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, ***intellectual disability, moderate to severe developmental delay,*** muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury].

[Click here to learn more about High Risk Complications from the CDC.](#)

WHAT ARE ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE?

Isolation and Quarantine are tools used to help protect the public by preventing exposure to people who have or may have a contagious disease.

WHEN WOULD SOMEONE BE PLACED UNDER QUARANTINE?

Quarantine in general means the separation of a person or group of people reasonably believed to have been *exposed to a communicable disease but not yet symptomatic*, from others who have not been so exposed, to prevent the possible spread of the communicable disease. Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who may have been exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

WHEN WOULD SOMEONE BE PLACED IN ISOLATION?

Isolation means the separation of a person or group of people known or reasonably believed to be *infected with a communicable disease and potentially infectious* from those who are not infected to prevent spread of the communicable disease. Isolation for public health purposes may be voluntary or compelled by federal, state, or local public health order. Isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

WHAT CAN I DO TO DECREASE MY RISK OF GETTING COVID-19?

The CDC has a number of suggestions for protecting you and your family. [Click here to review CDC recommendations.](#)

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP “FLATTEN THE CURVE” AND REDUCE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19?

Whether a presumptive positive case is someone under an isolation order on your street, or just a number on a county-wide database which feels distant and abstract, the actions we all need to take right now are the same: social distancing, avoiding nonessential gatherings, good hygiene, and following the guidance of public health officials. This is also true regardless of the number of cases confirmed in a community or county – the time to take proactive measures is now.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Town of Easton official website – www.easton.ma.us

Massachusetts Department of Public Health COVID-19 Homepage – www.mass.gov/covid19

Massachusetts 2-1-1 - <https://www.211info.org/corona-virus>

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

World Health Organization – <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>