

3/20/20

Information on COVID-19 safety and health practices and resources

Excerpted from memo dated 3/17/20 from District Nurse Coordinator Mary Ellen Reed:

Children of all ages will benefit from maintaining routines at home. Consider planning meals and activities in a scheduled way so that children know what to expect, much as they do during the school day. Perhaps preview your day over breakfast, which is done at the elementary level during circle time, and for middle and high school children, will allow questions and fears to be addressed by providing factual information. Consider opportunities that allow children to feel connected to each other even while at home, such as facetime with friends, interactive apps.

Practice social distancing and other measures during this COVID-19 pandemic

All persons are urged to maintain social distancing (approximately six feet away from other people) whenever possible and to continue to wash hands, utilize hand sanitizer and practice proper respiratory etiquette. This is the most effective way to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

Stop handshaking- use other methods of greeting such as a bow, elbow bump, or wave. Do continue to have eye contact and smile to help prevent feelings of social isolation and fear.

Stay home if feeling sick or if you have a sick family member in your home.

Utilize telemedicine when possible: Governor Baker has authorized insurance companies to reimburse providers at the same rate as office visits for telemedicine.

Emphasize the need to remain vigilant against stigma due to perceived race, national origin, or recent travel. Foster a supportive environment free from rumors or associations of a virus with a specific population.

The Massachusetts 211 line can help connect staff and families to services and resources who are in need of financial or other assistance, as well as up to date information to the general public about the virus and outbreak. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911.

Interpreter services are also available at the Massachusetts 211 line.

Fees for COVID-19 testing for those without health insurance will be waived.

Keeping the home safe, encourage your family members and any visitors to:

All Households

- Clean hands upon entering the home and at regular intervals.
- Create habits and reminders to avoid touching their face and cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, tables and handrails regularly
- When feasible, increase ventilation by opening windows
- Plan to have an adequate supply of daily medications at hand
- Limit food sharing
- Avoid sharing personal household items. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home.
- Clean AND disinfect [frequently touched surfaces](#) daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. Link for products that can be used to kill the virus <https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>. A solution of bleach and water is also effective. Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
 - 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

- Make sure you have access to several weeks of medications and supplies in case you need to stay home
- Discourage children and teens from gathering in other public places
- Hoarding of essential supplies such as toilet paper, will mean that your neighbor will have to go without. Plan for a two week supply of essential supplies.

Households with vulnerable seniors or those with significant underlying conditions (heart, lung, kidney disease; diabetes; and conditions that suppress the immune system):

- Have the healthy people in the household conduct themselves as if they were a significant risk to the person with underlying conditions. For example, wash hands frequently before interacting with the person, such as by feeding or caring for the person.
- If possible, provide a protected space for vulnerable household members.
- Ensure all utensils and surfaces are cleaned regularly.
- Limit visitors and contacts to household members.

Households with sick family members:

- The infected person should be isolated in a specific room, keeping the door closed, and avoiding interaction with other members of the household. If possible, use a separate bathroom. If the bathroom is shared, disinfect surfaces after use.
- Delegate one family member to provide care.
- Stay home unless you are seeking medical care.
- Monitor symptoms and seek prompt medical attention if the illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing).
- Call ahead: If you have a medical appointment, contact your healthcare provider to advise that you have, or suspect COVID-19. This will allow healthcare providers to take steps to protect others from exposure. If severe symptoms or respiratory distress, call EMS, as they have a protocol and protective equipment, to transport patients safely to the hospital for testing and treatment.
- Ask your healthcare provider to call the local or state health department. Persons who are placed under active monitoring, or facilitated self-monitoring, should follow instructions provided by their local health department.
- Your provider, in conjunction with the local health department, will make the decisions regarding the duration of isolation precautions and when they may be discontinued.
- Consider providing additional protections or more intensive care for household members over 65 year old or with underlying conditions. By doing the following:
 - Plan for an alternate caregiver if the current care provider becomes sick.
 - Understand and follow the sick individual's healthcare provider's instructions for medication(s) and care. Assist the patient with basic needs in the home and provide support for getting groceries, prescriptions, and other essential needs.
 - Be prepared to provide information to health care providers or EMS about medications being taken and any underlying health conditions.
 - Prohibit visitors who do not have an essential need to be in the home.
 - Household members should care for any pets in the home. Do not handle pets or other animals while sick.
 - If you are sick: Wear a facemask (if available) when around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.
- Those who are caring for a sick person should wear a facemask (if available) when providing care.

Resources for information

[Information on the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Mass 211: Home](#)

[Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Coronavirus](#)