

Community FAQs

in response to the Bedford resident under investigation for COVID-19

What is the risk level in Bedford for COVID-19?

Based on current information, the risk of acquiring COVID-19 remains low in Bedford and across Massachusetts. On Saturday, March 7th, the MA Department of Public Health (DPH) reported to the Bedford Board of Health (BOH) that a Bedford resident was reported to be a close contact of a presumptive positive case of COVID-19 who attended the Biogen conference. The resident was identified as a Person Under Investigation (PUI), was tested for COVID-19 and his immediate family are in home quarantine, awaiting the results of his test.

Should conditions change and the test results indicate that the Bedford resident is presumptively positive for COVID-19, the BOH and Town officials will work with State officials to communicate with anyone who may have had close contact with this resident to reduce any spread of illness.

Conditions regarding the COVID-19 response are rapidly updating. Please check the following websites regularly for information and updates:

MA Department of Public Health - <https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

Centers for Disease Control - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Bedford, MA Board of Health - <https://www.bedfordma.gov/bedford-board-of-health/pages/covid-19-coronavirus>

What is a “Person Under Investigation (PUI)?”

A PUI for COVID-19 is someone who met the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) risk assessment criteria](#) for testing and they were tested. The person immediately enters quarantine until results of the testing are available. This includes persons who have traveled to specific countries detailed in the [CDC Travel Health Alert](#). One of the most important messages for us to remember is that someone’s nationality alone is not a risk factor for COVID-19.

What is a “Presumptive Positive Case?”

A Presumptive Positive Case of COVID-19 is someone who met the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) risk assessment criteria](#) for testing and their test came back from the state laboratory as positive for COVID-19. The person then isolates at home and household and other close contacts may be subsequently tested.

What is considered close contact?

A close contact is defined by the CDC as:

- a) being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case; or
- b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on).

What is 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. Following notification of a presumptive or confirmed positive test result, persons will be required to be in isolation (keep to one room or floor of a home), separated from the rest of the family and other community contacts.

What is 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.

Can I be tested for COVID-19?

Only your healthcare provider can order a test for COVID-19. If you are feeling ill, contact your provider by phone, email, text or video platform to determine next steps. It is important to contact your provider for guidance on testing and not just arrive at their office.

What should individuals do if they are experiencing symptoms (fever, cough)?

If you are experiencing symptoms (fever, cough), you should contact your primary care provider for further guidance. Please do not go directly to the Emergency Department (ED). If your medical provider directs you to the ED based on their assessment, please call ahead to the ED.

Lahey Hospital and Medical Center ED: 781-744-5100

Emerson Hospital ED: 978-287-3690

For any medical emergency, call 911 or go to the ED.

What can area residents do to reduce the risk of acquiring COVID-19?

While it is important to be vigilant and informed about the COVID-2019 outbreak, please note that the influenza (Flu) infection rate is high in Massachusetts this year. It is not too late to get a flu shot. Call the Bedford Board of Health at (781) 275-6507 to sign up for appointment. Also, as a means of preventing transmission of any respiratory infection, please practice the following activities:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based sanitizers;
- Avoid touching your face, eyes or mouth with unwashed hands;
- Frequently clean common touchpoint surfaces, including but not limited to electronics, door knobs, and countertops;
- Avoid sharing food utensils, containers, and other personal items;
- Distance yourself from someone who appears sick and keep your distance from others if you are sick;
- Stay home from work if you are sick; and,
- Practice [proper cough etiquette](#). Cover your mouth or nose when coughing or sneezing with a tissue, throw the tissue away and wash or sanitize your hands. If a tissue isn't available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve

If you have concerns about your health or symptoms, please contact your medical provider (primary care physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner)

What is recommended for people who may have come in contact with PUI or family members of the PUI who is being tested for COVID-19?

If individuals who have come in contact with family members of the PUI for COVID-19 have specific concerns about their health, they should contact their medical provider (primary care physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner) or the Department of Public Health for further guidance. Each day the DPH updates a dedicated COVID-19 website, which provides information on the COVID-19 status and resources including facts sheets in multiple languages: www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus. The Bedford BOH is also available to answer any other questions 781-275-6507 or boh@bedfordma.gov.

Will upcoming community or school events and activities be cancelled as a result of this case?

There are currently no recommendations for cancelling community or school events or non-international school trips. Private entities and individuals make their own decisions about their own events.

How are our public schools and buildings being cleaned?

All of our public schools and town buildings are regularly cleaned, including disinfecting bathrooms and wiping down surfaces. Upon learning that a child of the PUI for COVID-19 attends Bedford High School, out of an abundance of caution, BPS thoroughly cleaned and disinfected the High School. Bedford Facilities Department is applying a disinfectant, indicated for COVID-19 using electrostatic dispenser guns. Custodians have already been using this equipment in all schools as part of enhanced cleaning techniques. There is currently no recommendation to close any Bedford Public Schools due to COVID-19. School buses were disinfected this weekend, and a cleaning regimen is being developed for the near future.

Will Bedford Schools be Closing?

At this time, the CDC and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health are not advising that schools close in situations where a school-attending child has been in contact with a PUI, nor if the student him/her/themselves is a PUI.

Is it safe to travel internationally?

On March 4, the [CDC issued an updated Travel Health Alert](#) for all United States residents, instructing travelers returning from countries with a Level 3 alert (currently China, South Korea, Iran, and Italy) to self-quarantine (“stay home”) and monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the US. This guidance also instructs travelers from countries with a Level 2 alert (currently Japan) to monitor their health and limit interactions with others for 14 days after returning to the US. The guidance advises against any non-essential travel to Level 3 countries.

These FAQs will be updated as new information becomes available.