

Message from the Bedford Board of Health on Coronavirus and Local Preparedness
February 26, 2020

While the risk of Coronavirus (named by the World Health Organization as “COVID-2019”) in Massachusetts is currently considered low and we only have one confirmed case in MA to date, the Bedford Board of Health (BOH) understands that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) announced that the situation is rapidly evolving and more cases of Coronavirus are likely to emerge in the US in coming days. BOH staff have regular communication with the [MA Department of Public Health \(DPH\)](#) and the [CDC](#) who are keeping us updated on national and local conditions.

The Bedford BOH is using current [CDC recommendations](#) to conduct risk assessment and public health management of persons with potential COVID-2019. Please note that this is a reference tool only and that definitive answers to manage potential cases are made by the Bedford Board of Health. You are advised to contact the Bedford BOH at (781) 275-6507 if you have traveled to China within the past 21 days. If you have recently traveled to China and are experiencing lower respiratory illness symptoms such as, but not limited to fever, cough, shortness of breath you are advised to contact your health care provider. Please note that while the incidence of COVID-2019 is rising in other countries, contact with the BOH is warranted only if there is a very high degree of suspicion of contact or exposure with someone with COVID-2019 from those affected countries.

Currently, there is no vaccine available to prevent COVID-2019 and no medication is available to treat this disease. However, it is important to note that since 9/11 local BOHs across MA and the United States have been tasked with ensuring public health emergency preparedness. We have an emergency dispensing site (EDS) established in Bedford in the event we have to distribute medication or vaccine should it become available, we have an established corps of volunteers (Bedford Citizen Corps) on the ready to assist local public health and public safety officials in the event we have to respond to a crisis, we have connectivity to the MA DPH and the CDC and have safety, security and distribution plans in place for potential future receipt of medication or vaccine from the CDC Strategic National Stockpile. These plans are updated annually and our EDS is exercised annually as our Town-wide flu clinic.

At the Bedford BOH, our current role centers on provision of prevention messaging and tracking asymptomatic travelers returning from China. We have been providing periodic updates on our website relative to the national response, disease signs and symptoms, what to do if you are symptomatic, and we provide guidance to residents who call for information. Should we have to monitor residents identified by the MA DPH as having to quarantine at home, we are trained and prepared to do so. The BOH has made initial connections with area hospitals to ensure open lines of communication are established should additional cases be identified and to prepare to provide any necessary support/outreach.

We have posted updated information from the MA DPH and CDC as well as links to Coronavirus fact sheets on the BOH website at www.bedfordma.gov/boh. Further, the World Health Organization is publishing [daily situational updates](#). We encourage residents to check back regularly for updates.

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 with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- 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;
- Stay home from work if you are sick; and,
- Practice [proper cough etiquette](#).