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## **COVID-19 / Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **March 10, 2020**

The Belmont Health Department continues to monitor the latest information about COVID-19 (Coronavirus). This is a continually evolving health concern. Accordingly, the Belmont Health Department will periodically provide the community with information about COVID-19.

In the FAQ below are answers to some common questions you may have about the virus and how the town is preparing to address related concerns:

#### **Q: What is the best way to prevent getting COVID-19?**

A: *The same prevention measures apply to COVID-19 as other illnesses such as flu, gastrointestinal viruses, bacterial infections, etc. Practice personal prevention measures: wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. For more suggestions see:*  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>

#### **Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

A: *Current symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 include mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. More information about symptoms can be found here:* <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html>

#### **Q: What should I do if I develop a fever and respiratory illness?**

A: *If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness stay home from work and/or school. If you are concerned, call your healthcare provider for guidance. Your healthcare provider can help you determine next steps.*



**Q: Will I be alerted if Belmont residents or students have COVID-19?**

A: *Confirmed COVID-19 cases will be announced by MDPH by county with the person's gender and general age to ensure patient confidentiality. No personal information will be shared publicly by Town officials.*

**Q: What should I do if I am traveling to/returning from another country?**

A: *It depends on the country of travel to/from. CDC recommendation for travel is changing daily. You should check the CDC Travel Information webpage frequently:*  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

*The Belmont Health Department is following guidance from the MDPH and is asking returning travelers from **Level 3** countries (currently China, Iran, Italy, and South Korea) to self-quarantine ("stay home") for 14 days from the date of entry to the United States and to self-monitor for symptoms consistent for COVID-19.*

*MDPH will not be providing local health departments with traveler information on returnees from Italy and South Korea.*

*Returning travelers from Level 2 countries (currently Japan) are asked to limit contact with others and to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms.*

*Additional information about MDPH guidance regarding travel can be found here:*  
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/travel-information-related-to-covid-19>

*If you have questions about your particular situation, you are encouraged to contact the Belmont Health Department.*

**Q: Are children more susceptible to COVID-19?**

A: *Currently, there is no evidence that children are more susceptible. It is estimated that 1% of infections recorded in China occurred in children. However, it is important to note that infections in children were reported in children of all ages. From limited information published from past Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) outbreaks, infection among children was relatively uncommon. More information about children and COVID-19 is available here. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html>*

**Q: How are Belmont Public Schools and other public buildings being cleaned?**

A: *At this time the CDC and MDPH continue to recommend routine cleaning and disinfecting practices. As a proactive measure, the Town purchased two sanitizing machines, a Clorox T360 and Geneon mister, to treat all high-touch areas within the*



*schools and other public buildings on a rotating basis. The equipment and solutions used by these machines are commonly used in hospitals where there are both medically compromised patients and pathogens.*

*Additionally, town departments have been provided with supplies so that surfaces in offices can be disinfected as needed throughout the day.*

**Q: How can I talk to my kids about COVID-19?**

A: *Please see the talking points for families helping kids deal with stressful events from Riverside Trauma Center:*  
<http://riversidetraumacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Managing-Reactions-to-the-Coronavirus.pdf>

**Q: Who can I talk to if I feel worried or anxious about COVID-19?**

A: *The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) runs a Disaster Distress Helpline to provide immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories. Stress, anxiety and other depression-like symptoms are common reactions after a disaster. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.*

*Additionally, you may call to request assistance from Janet Amdur, the Social Worker for the Town of Belmont, at (617) 993- 2983.*

**Q: Are some people at higher risk for COVID-19?**

A: *Early information reported from China indicates that some people are at greater risk of getting very sick from this virus. This includes:*

- *Older adults*
- *People who have serious chronic medical conditions such as:*
  - *Heart disease*
  - *Diabetes*
  - *Lung disease*

**Q: What should I do if I am at higher risk for COVID-19?**



A: *Here are some ways to get ready for community spread of COVID-19:*

- *Have supplies on hand*
  - *Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary medications to have on hand in case you are required to stay home for a prolonged period of time due to an outbreak of COVID-19.*
  - *Be sure to have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (i.e. tissues) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home.*
  - *Have enough household items and groceries on hand so that you will be prepared to stay at home for a period of time.*
- *Take everyday precautions*
  - *Avoid close contact with people who are sick.*
  - *Wash your hands with soap and warm water frequently, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or having been in a public place*
  - *If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.*
  - *If possible avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, shaking hands with people.*
    - *Use a tissue to cover your hand or finger if you need to touch something.*
  - *Avoid touching your face, nose, eyes, etc.*
- *If COVID-19 is spreading in your community, take extra measures to practice social distancing between yourself and other people.*
  - *Stay home as much as possible*
    - *Consider alternative ways of getting food delivered to your house through family, social, or commercial networks.*
- *Have a plan if you get sick:*
  - *Stay in touch with others by phone or email. You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, etc. if you become sick.*
  - *Determine who can provide you with care if your caregiver gets sick.*
- *Watch for symptoms of COVID-19*
  - *Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms (i.e. fever, cough, shortness of breath). Call your doctor immediately if you feel like you are developing symptoms.*
- *For more information please see:*
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

**Q: What are current recommendations for wearing face masks?**

A: Follow CDCs recommendations for using a face mask:

- CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
- You should only wear a mask if a healthcare professional recommends it. A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and are showing symptoms. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks also is crucial for health workers and other people who are taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

**Q: What happens to people who are around someone who is a contact of a case of COVID-19?**

A: When household contacts of a case do not have symptoms (for example, a student whose parent is a case), people who are in contact with the student (“contacts of the contact”), do not have restrictions and can go about their usual activities. CDC does not recommend testing, symptom monitoring or special management for people exposed to asymptomatic people with potential exposures to COVID-19 (such as in a household), i.e., “contacts of contacts;” these people are not considered exposed to COVID-19.

People who are “contacts of contacts” (who do not have symptoms) have no public health requirements to inform employers or undergo any “special management” like staying home. For more information see the link for:

**[Contacts of Asymptomatic People Exposed to COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html)**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html>

Private employers and businesses may choose to make their own decisions. We encourage decision makers to consult the **[CDC guidance for businesses.](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html)**

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**Q: What does it mean to be a “close contact”?**



A: *Close contacts are defined as persons who are within approximately 6 feet of an infected person for greater than 10 minutes, or living in the same household, or caring for an infected person.*

**Q: Can my student attend school if a member of my household is quarantined?**

A: *If a member of your household is quarantined, and does not have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, your child will likely be able to attend school. However, please call your child's school nurse before sending your child to school so that the nurse may obtain information from you and consult with the Belmont Health Department. \*\*If your child is at low risk for COVID-19 and does not have symptoms, the Belmont Health Department is not advising anyone to stay away from school or activities. Schools and the Belmont Health Department are in close communication about this matter. As always, use your own discretion.*