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PUBLIC HEALTH WEEKLY UPDATE:
COVID-19
July 31, 2020

Below is a summary related to the Town of Belmont's response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. The Town of Belmont is committed to providing information including this weekly update on the COVID-19 situation. Numbers related to COVID-19 and other pertinent information are updated regularly on the Town's website.

The Town of Belmont currently has 238 *cumulative* confirmed cases of COVID-19. There are have been a total of 60 COVID-19 related deaths in the Town of Belmont, 57 of which are confirmed by filed death certificates with the Town Clerk's Office and 3 are *unconfirmed*.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) continues to provide weekly reports of COVID-19 data by city or town as part of its Dashboard for COVID-19 Cases, Quarantine and Monitoring. MDPH updates this list once a week on Wednesdays.

Updated Travel Requirements: In Effect August 1, 2020

Effective August 1, 2020, all visitors and returning residents entering Massachusetts must follow new travel orders. The Commonwealth has made great progress to slow the spread of COVID-19 and gradually re-open the economy, and all residents and visitors have a responsibility to help keep transmission levels as low as possible.

All visitors entering Massachusetts, including returning residents, who do not meet an exemption, are required to:

- Complete the **Massachusetts Travel Form** prior to arrival, unless you are visiting from a lower-risk state designated by the **Department of Public Health**.
- Quarantine for 14 days or produce a negative molecular COVID-19 test result that has been administered up to 72-hours prior to your arrival in Massachusetts.

If your COVID-19 test result has not been received prior to arrival, visitors and residents must quarantine until they receive a negative test result.

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Failure to submit a completed **Massachusetts Travel Form**, when required, or failure to comply with the quarantine requirement, if applicable, **may result in a $500 fine per day.** Additional information about both the **Massachusetts Travel Form** and the 14-day quarantine requirement, can be found in this **comprehensive guidance issued by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.**

Please find more information below, including the list of lower-risk states, exemptions, business guidance and other details.

Exemptions:

- **Lower-risk state**: This includes individuals coming from a COVID-19 lower-risk state within the United States, as defined here. The current list of lower risk states includes: Connecticut, Hawaii, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont
- **Transitory travel**: this includes people who are passing through Massachusetts and permits travelers to drive through the State or to connect to their airplane, bus or train, or to stop at a highway rest stop, but this exception extends only so long as it is reasonably required for the traveler to complete their transit, make any necessary airplane, bus, or train connection, or make use of travel services such as at a highway rest stop.
- **Persons Commuting for Work or School**: People who regularly commute, at least weekly, outside of Massachusetts to a fixed place to attend school or work or any person who regularly commutes, at least weekly into Massachusetts to a fixed place to attend school or work; provided that in either case, this exception applies only to and from the person's residence and place of work or school. Workers or students who travel to any place that is not their home state for personal or leisure reasons cannot rely on this exemption.
- **Patients Seeking or Receiving Medical Treatment**: Patients who are traveling to Massachusetts to seek or receive specialized medical care from a physician located in the Commonwealth and persons accompanying and providing needed support to the patient.
- **Military Personnel**: Any person who is required to travel to Massachusetts at the order or directive of a Federal or State military authority.
- **Workers Providing Critical Infrastructure Services**: Workers who enter Massachusetts to perform critical infrastructure functions as specified in Version 3.1 of the listing published by the Federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency are exempt from quarantine while they are commuting to or from or while at work. For the first 14-days after arrival, when the worker is not at work or commuting to work they must quarantine. Additional information may be found here: **https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidance-essential-critical-infrastructure-workforce** Workers who travel to or from Massachusetts for personal or leisure reasons cannot rely on this exemption.

Testing as an Alternative to Quarantine

You do not need to quarantine for 14 days if you took a molecular or PCR test for COVID-19 and have received a negative result. The specimen for the test must have been collected no longer than 72 hours before your arrival in Massachusetts, and the test results must be from an approved molecular (PCR) SARS-CoV2 test, approved by the **Massachusetts Department of Public Health**. **Negative antigen or serology/antibody tests will not be accepted.** Upon request, you must be able to demonstrate proof of the negative test result. Additional information about approved molecular tests can be found in the **Department of Public Health Guidance**.

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If you took a test prior to your arrival but have not received your negative result, you **MUST quarantine** until you receive the negative result. You may obtain a test at your own expense after your arrival in Massachusetts, but you **MUST quarantine** until you obtain a negative result. **Use the COVID-19 testing map to find a site near you**.

Visitors are strongly urged to obtain a negative result before traveling to Massachusetts.

Testing for children, 10 years and younger, who are traveling with an adult from their household is not required.

A traveler may choose to leave Massachusetts before the completion of his or her 14-day quarantine.

Types of COVID-19 Testing

There are 2 types of COVID-19 testing: **Diagnostic Testing** and **Antibody Testing**.

Diagnostic testing is the type that tells you if you **currently** have COVID-19. These tests are typically done using a sample from a nasal or oral swab. There are two types of diagnostic tests:

- **Molecular** tests, such as RT-PCR tests, that detect the virus's genetic material.
- **Antigen** tests that detect specific proteins on the surface of the virus.
    - Often called "rapid diagnostic testing" – Antigen tests are more likely to miss an active coronavirus infection compared to molecular tests. Positive results are usually highly accurate but negative results may need to be confirmed with a molecular test.

Antibody (or serology) testing is the type that helps you find out whether you may have been infected with COVID-19 **in the past**. This is a blood test that looks for antibodies, which are proteins in your blood that fight infections. Antibody testing is important to help us understand how many people have been exposed to the virus.

- Important to know: at this time, **most people don't need antibody tests** and they should not be used to guide decisions on whether to stop isolation or return to work. Currently, there is no proof that antibodies in your blood means that you are immune from further infection with COVID-19.

***Under the new August 1 travel requirements, the test that is required to forego your 14 day quarantine is Molecular or PCR Testing.** Make sure to inquire about which test you are receiving at the testing site, as the antigen or antibody tests cannot be used as a replacement for molecular / PCR testing. More information on types of testing can be found on the FDA's website here.

Safe dining

As we move further into phase 3, more individuals as well as businesses are able to take advantage of the increased allowances for outdoor and indoor dining options at our local food establishments. Accompanying this is the importance of putting the appropriate safety measures in place, to keep both staff and customers healthy. Below are a few reminders for best practices to help keep food service staff and customers safe:

- It is important to make sure all staff and customers are wearing **face masks**, and are wearing them correctly.

- A properly worn face covering should cover an individual's nose and mouth at the same time. A graphic below from the WHO illustrates the proper way to utilize a face mask.
- ***Customers, who are able to wear a face mask, are required to wear one when not seated at a table. Please remember that face masks should be worn when entering/leaving a dining area, going to the bathroom, etc.***

- Another consideration is for proper menu procedures. At this time, reusable menus are not permitted. Instead, customers may be given single use, disposable paper menus, and/or alternatively a restaurant can utilize a posted menu on a whiteboard, chalkboard, or digital board, or direct customers to an electronic menu to look at on their personal phones/devices.

- Lastly, food service establishments are required to retain contact information (a phone number or email) from one person in each dining party. This is important for contact tracing, in case of an outbreak.

For the full list of guidance on food establishment practices during phase 3, please follow this link: https://www.mass.gov/doc/restaurants-checklist-english/download

Providing Information for Contact Tracing

As more businesses have become accessible to the public during phase 3, it is important to understand why restaurants and other businesses will be asking for your party's contact information when you dine or spend time there. In the event of an outbreak these establishments will utilize your information for contact tracing, to help inform you and others about potential exposure to COVID-19, so you can get tested and self-isolate if needed. Your name and contact information will not be used for anything else, and will be expunged after a 3 week safety period.

What is contact tracing?

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is collaborating with Partners in Health (PIH) to contact every resident that tests positive for COVID-19. Public health officials from PIH and/or the local board of health will speak with infected individuals and help identify a list of **close contacts*** that they may have had an interaction with in the 48-hour period before their start of symptoms, or the two days prior to the test that led to a positive result for individuals who do not have symptoms.

Once close contacts are identified, public health officials will begin reaching out to individuals on the list of contacts to notify them about the exposure to an infected individual (who will not be identified) and to also provide them with direction about a 14-day quarantine period and instruction on self-monitoring for symptoms. Contact tracers or local board of health officials then will check in with individuals to monitor symptoms and needs throughout the duration of the quarantine period.

If an individual develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while in quarantine, they will need to notify public health staff, and remain in isolation until symptoms resolve. Contact tracing will then begin on behalf of this individual as well.

*MDPH defines a **close contact** as someone that has being within approximately 6-feet of a known COVID-19 case for about 15 minutes.

Why is contact tracing important?
People in close contact with someone infected with a virus such as COVID-19 are at higher risk for becoming infected themselves and of potentially infecting others. Contract tracing finds possible new cases quickly so that they can be isolated to help stop further spread of the virus.

Contact Tracing: Answer the Call

To help reduce the spread of the virus, Belmont is participating in the Massachusetts COVID-19 Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) program.

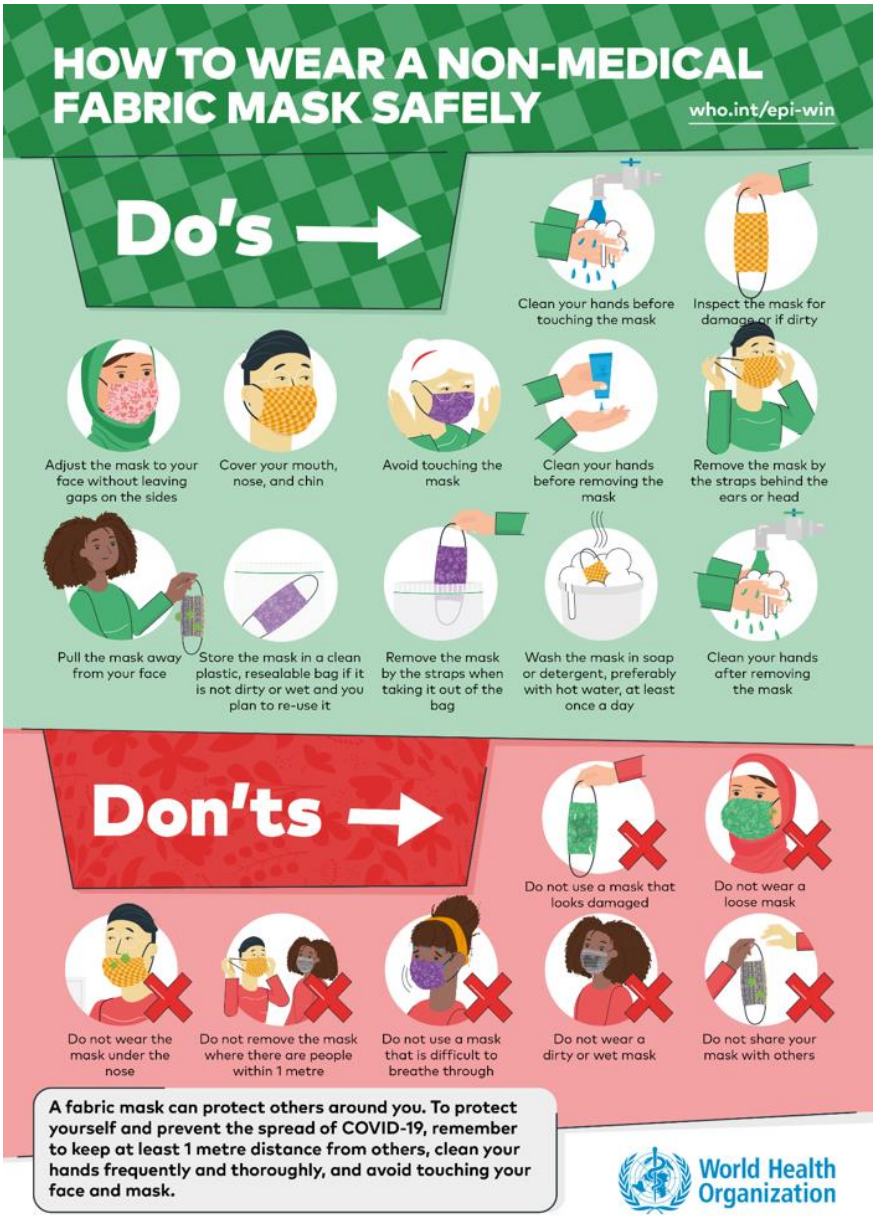
A *Reminder*: Why it is important to wear a cloth face covering

Cloth face coverings may help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others. Wearing a cloth face covering will help protect people around you, including those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and workers who frequently come into close contact with other people (e.g., in stores and restaurants). Cloth face coverings are most likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19 when they are widely used by people in public settings. The spread of COVID-19 can be reduced when cloth face coverings are used along with other preventive measures, including social distancing, frequent handwashing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or respirators. Currently, those are critical supplies that should be reserved for healthcare workers and other first responders. Cloth face coverings are not personal protective equipment (PPE). They are not appropriate substitutes for PPE such as respirators (like N95 respirators) or medical facemasks (like surgical masks) in workplaces where respirators or facemasks are recommended or required to protect the wearer.

Cloth face coverings should **not** be worn by:

- Children younger than 2 years old
- Anyone who has trouble breathing
- Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance



For more information on face coverings: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks

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BELMONT FOOD PANTRY HOURS

The Food Pantry will be **OPEN** on a limited basis for **July, August & September** from **8:30–10:00 am** for Belmont residents to receive food or to drop off donations. The pantry will **NOT** be open on any other days.

SATURDAY, JULY 25TH
SATURDAY, AUGUST 1ST
SATURDAY, AUGUST 15TH
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH

GO TO OUR WEBSITE/FACEBOOK PAGE FOR CONTINUED UPDATES
https://sites.google.com/site/thebelmontfoodpantry/
https://www.facebook.com/BFPantry/

The Belmont Food Pantry will be open to distribute food from 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. on the dates listed above. The distribution will still be a drive-thru with everyone remaining in their car, pulling up to the volunteer to check in and another volunteer will put the bag(s), per family, into the car. Walkers PLEASE keep a distance from each other and Food Pantry volunteers WILL COME to you. Belmont residents who are coming to receive food, please remember to bring your ID and have it ready before you get to the check in. Click here for the application and instructions: https://sites.google.com/…/thebelmont…/home/new-client-forms

Belmont Helps: Ways to Help Our Community

Donate | Volunteer | Ask for Help | Find Resources | Request or Help Sew Masks

Belmont Helps, a Winn Brook Parent Teacher Association Committee, is a 100% volunteer organization founded on March 14, 2020 to connect Belmont area community members in need during the COVID-19 outbreak to resources and volunteers. More information can be found at www.belmonthelps.org. Contact belmonthelps@gmail.com or leave a message at (617) 993-0162 for a call back from a team member.

Belmont COVID-19 Informational Call Center and Email

For general COVID-19 questions not specific to the Town of Belmont, all Massachusetts residents are encouraged to call the state's 2-1-1 hotline that is staffed by operators 24/7 and with translators

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available in multiple languages. Residents with questions can dial 2-1-1 from any landline or cellphone or use the live chat option on the on the Mass 2-1-1 website.

The Town of Belmont has also established a call center to allow residents to ask non-medical questions specific to COVID-19 in Belmont, phone number (617) 993-2222. Questions can also be emailed to: belmonteoc@belmont-ma.gov

Please call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency. Calls should not be made to 9-1-1 to obtain information about COVID-19.