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PUBLIC HEALTH WEEKLY UPDATE:
COVID-19
September 18, 2020

Registration Link: https://tinyurl.com/y4c5d9tw

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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 daily on the Town's website.

The Town of Belmont currently has 259* *cumulative* confirmed cases of COVID-19, which is an increase of 5 cases since our September 11 report. The number of new cases over the last 14 days represents an overall increase for the town of Belmont, both in new cases and in percent testing positivity. 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*. Due to the new case count over the past two weeks, this moves Belmont into the green zone (<4 cases per 100k reported in the last two weeks) based on the average daily case rate.

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.

*COVID-19 Reporting Issues in MAVEN

The Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiological Network (MAVEN) is the system used statewide to track and follow up with COVID-19 cases and contacts. Due to the scale of the pandemic and the constant influx of information into the system, the town designation of COVID cases is sometimes changed as more is learned about each case. This can be due to employment, if they attend college, or where they are going to isolate. This sometimes leads to discrepancies in the numbers reported weekly by the state, as they might report the numbers either before or after cases are moved to their rightful town. This is why the data that the town of Belmont reports may differ from what the state reports. The Belmont Health Department looks at the most updated data that is available every day, to ensure that we are reporting the most current numbers for the town.

Flu Shots for Those Without Insurance, or who are Underinsured

The Belmont Health Department will again be offering flu shots for those who are under or uninsured this year. The Health Department hopes to receive their supply of flu vaccines by early October. The Health Department website will be updated with information on this, and these vaccines will be given by appointment once we receive them. Please call the Health Department at **617-993-2720** if you are interested, have any questions about this service, or for further information.

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Lower-Risk States Update

As per the August 1 travel order, there have been states added/removed to/from the lower-risk group that is exempt from testing/quarantine upon arriving into Massachusetts. The newly **added** states include New Mexico, Wyoming, Oregon, and Washington. Delaware, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia were **removed** from the lower-risk list. The full list of lower-risk states is as follows: Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming.

Belmont Food Pantry: September/October Hours

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

New School Flu Shot Requirements

Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, influenza vaccine will be required for all students. Influenza vaccine is always important to receive to reduce the risk of getting sick with influenza, reduce the severity of disease if one does get sick (including the risk of hospitalization) due to influenza, as well as preventing the spread of influenza to others. During the COVID-19 pandemic, influenza vaccine will be especially critical to reduce the overall impact of respiratory illness on the population, protect vulnerable populations from severe illness, and decrease the overall burden on the healthcare system.

Which students need to receive influenza vaccine?

Students in Kindergarten – Grade 12 will be required to receive influenza vaccine for the current influenza season for school attendance unless they have a medical or religious exemption.

When do students need to receive influenza vaccine?

Students must receive influenza vaccine for the current season by **December 31, 2020**.

Are there any exemptions to receiving influenza vaccine?

Medical and religious exemptions are allowable in the state of Massachusetts.

What type of influenza vaccine can students receive?

Any age-appropriate licensed influenza vaccine for the current season fulfills the requirement. This includes injectable and nasal spray vaccine types.

Accessing influenza vaccines

- The Belmont Health Department will have enough flu vaccine available for those without health insurance or anyone that may be underinsured.
- Anyone with health insurance is strongly encouraged to contact local pharmacies and/or their primary care physician to schedule a time to get a flu shot.

For more information and full guidelines on this new requirement, visit: https://www.mass.gov/news/flu-vaccine-now-required-for-all-massachusetts-school-students-enrolled-in-child-care-pre

Belmont 2020 Elections

- November 3, 2020: **Presidential Election**

Voting by Mail is available for the November 3, 2020 Election. You can get an application on the town website: https://www.belmont-ma.gov/town-clerk or by contacting the Town Clerk's office by Phone 617-993-2603 or email: townclerk@belmont-ma.gov

Check your Massachusetts voter registration status

- To check if the Town Clerk has received and processed your application for a Vote By Mail Ballot or Absentee Ballots, visit www.trackmyballotMA.com If your status is displayed as "pending" for November 3, 2020, your application has been received and your ballot will be mailed. We are told by the State to expect delivery of ballots to the Belmont Town Clerk around October 6th – ballots will be mailed to voters shortly thereafter.

Updated COVID-19 Data Visualizations

For updated Belmont COVID-19 data visualizations including information on age, sex, race, and percent testing positive, please see the attached document, or view the August 21 update which can be found here: https://www.belmont-ma.gov/home/urgent-alerts/covid-19-information-for-the-town-of-belmont-find-all-updates-here

#MaskUpBelmont

Wear face coverings when leaving home to prevent the spread of COVID-19!

#MaskUpMA is a new statewide campaign encouraging everyone to wear their face coverings in public and when around other individuals. In order to promote this effort, the Belmont Health and Recreation Departments would like to collect photos from its citizens to showcase them proudly wearing their masks out in Belmont. If you, your organization, or someone you know in Belmont would also like to be featured wearing face masks around town, please submit your photos to**: lsharp@belmont-ma.gov**

For more information about #MaskUpMA, you can visit: https://www.mass.gov/news/mask-up-ma

Updated Gathering Order: Effective August 11, 2020

Governor Baker signed an updated gatherings order, effective Tuesday, August 11, which will:

- Reduce the limit on outdoor gatherings from 100 to 50 people (indoor gatherings limit will remain at 25 people)
- Apply these limits to all types of gatherings, on **both public and private property**
- Require face coverings where more than 10 people from different households will be mixing.

Restaurant rules have been updated to state that alcoholic beverages may only be served for on-site consumption if accompanied by orders for food prepared on-site. The administration will be taking measures to ensure that bars masquerading as restaurants will be closed.
Public safety officials, including state and local law enforcement, have the jurisdiction to enforce these orders and event hosts in violation of these orders will be subject to fines or cease and desist orders.
To read the full gatherings order, **click here**.

14-Day City and Town Level Data

Link to the COVID-19 Weekly Public Health Report, which can be found here:
https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting#covid-19-weekly-public-health-report-

For Current Info on Travel Restrictions and Procedures:

https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order

COVID-19 Testing

Should I be tested?

You should get a test for COVID-19 if:

- You develop *any* symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild, or
- You are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild, please contact your healthcare provider and a test site near you to schedule a test. You can also check your symptoms online.
Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus and may include:

- Fever, chills or shaking chills
- Signs of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, lowered oxygen saturation)
- Fatigue, sore throat, headache, body aches/myalgia, or new loss of sense of taste or smell
- Other less common symptoms can include gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g. nausea, vomiting, diarrhea), rash, and inflammatory conditions such as “COVID toes”.
- In elderly, chronically ill, or debilitated individuals such as residents of a long-term care facility, symptoms of COVID-19 may be subtle such as alterations in mental status or in blood glucose control

Where can I get a test?

Please visit the Massachusetts interactive testing map to find a testing site near you.
You can also download a full list of sites: MA COVID-19 Testing Sites PDF | DOC
Information continues to evolve quickly, so we encourage all those looking to be tested to contact the site prior to arrival. Many sites may also require pre-screening, a referral and/or an appointment.

Is there a cost?

COVID-19 testing for symptomatic individuals and close contacts is usually covered by insurance and available at no cost to you. Contact your insurance with questions about if particular testing sites are within your network.
Additionally, many test sites in the Commonwealth test uninsured individuals for free. If you are uninsured, please call your local test site to confirm before making an appointment.

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Stop the Spread Testing Sites

The Commonwealth has launched a strategic testing program involving free COVID-19 testing sites in communities throughout Massachusetts to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

This "Stop the Spread" initiative is a data-driven effort to reduce the prevalence of COVID-19 in communities that are above the state average in total cases and positive test rate, and have experienced a decline in testing levels since April. The testing sites are located in different cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. Residents of these communities are urged to take advantage of the availability of these new testing sites, even if they are asymptomatic. While these sites are being launched in these communities, they are open to all residents of the Commonwealth, and residents do not need to have symptoms to be tested.
You can find additional information about the "Stop the Spread" initiative test sites here: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/stop-the-spread

COVID-19 and Emergency Preparedness

Tropical Storm Isaias as well as increased COVID-19 activity throughout the country have highlighted the need to continue to think about emergency preparedness, as well as preparedness for COVID-19. Please see our Preparedness Tips document on the COVID-19 update page here: https://www.belmont-ma.gov/home/urgent-alerts/covid-19-information-for-the-town-of-belmont-find-all-updates-here

COVID-19 Testing Reminders:

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 nasal swab, oral swab, or saliva sample. 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, and may also be more likely to return a false positive result in certain testing situations.

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.

Belmont Helps: Ways to Help Our Community

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

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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 encouraged to call the state's 2-1-1 hotline that is staffed by operators 24/7 and with translators 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. The call center will be staffed Monday through Friday from 8am to 4pm the number for the call center is (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.**