



Southbridge Public Schools

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Receiver / Superintendent

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Southbridge Public Schools Advises on Coronavirus Risk

As you are certainly aware, a recent outbreak of Covid-19, or the coronavirus, has caused concern worldwide after being initially discovered in Wuhan city, Hubei province, China. Southbridge Public Schools has been in contact with public health agencies, including the Southbridge Board of Health, to manage any risk related to this outbreak.

It is important to note that currently, the overall risk to residents of Massachusetts remains low, although the risk for the more common influenza (flu) virus remains high.

The spread of this outbreak is being monitored by multiple agencies. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), other Federal agencies, local boards of health, and clinical partners to share the most updated information as it occurs.

Residents of Southbridge should continue to take measures to prevent colds and the flu, which may also provide protection from Covid-19, such as:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If unable to wash your hands, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve (not with your hands)
- Stay away from people who are sick and stay home when you are sick.

As stated above, the risk of influenza is much higher than the risk of Covid-19 for Massachusetts residents at this time.

For more information on the coronavirus, please see the attached fact sheet from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health both [in English](#) and [in Spanish](#).



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The State of Massachusetts also provides detailed information about the current outbreak of Covid-19, or the coronavirus on the Mass.gov website ([mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov))

You can also get updates and information about Covid-19 from the Centers for Disease Control website ([CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)).

As always, Southbridge Public Schools places a high priority on the safety and well-being of our students, teachers, and staff. If there are any changes to the level of risk or if any other new developments occur, we will provide prompt notice to the community through our district website and other communication channels. Please stay healthy and practice the flu prevention techniques listed above.

It is the policy of the Southbridge Public Schools pursuant to Federal and Massachusetts laws not to discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability, the administration of its educational programs, activities, or employment policies

Es la póliza de las Escuelas Públicas de Southbridge, de conformidad con las leyes Federales y de Massachusetts, no discriminar a los individuos por raza, color, sexo, identidad de género, religión, origen nacional, orientación sexual o discapacidad, la administración de sus programas educativos, actividades, o pólizas de empleo.

2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

February 6, 2020

A new virus known as 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a respiratory virus first detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. This virus has resulted in thousands of confirmed human infections, with 99 percent of them in China. Other countries, including the United States, have identified a still small but growing number of cases in people who have traveled to China.

How does coronavirus spread?

Coronaviruses are respiratory viruses and are generally spread through respiratory secretions (such as droplets from coughs and sneezes) of an infected person to another person. Information about how this novel coronavirus spreads is still limited.

What are the symptoms of 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

This coronavirus causes a respiratory (lung) infection. Symptoms of this infection include:

- fever
- coughing
- shortness of breath
- in severe cases, pneumonia (infection in the lungs).

While most people recover from this infection, some infections can lead to severe disease or death. Older people and those with pre-existing medical problems seem to have a greater risk for severe disease.

What are the treatments? Is there a vaccine?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for 2019 Novel Coronavirus infection, other than supportive care and to relieve symptoms. Currently, there is no vaccine available to protect people from infection with 2019 Novel Coronavirus.

How can I protect myself?

Although risk to Massachusetts residents from 2019 Novel Coronavirus is low, the same precautions to help prevent colds and the flu can help protect against other respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Stay home if you are sick.

Should I wear a mask when I go out in public?

The health risk to Massachusetts residents remains low and at this time and we are not recommending that people wear masks when they are in public. Masks can be useful in some settings, such as a clinic waiting room, to prevent someone who has a respiratory illness from spreading it to others. There is no hard evidence that wearing a mask protects the wearer outside of the healthcare setting.



How do you test a person for 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

Testing for 2019 Novel Coronavirus is only available through the Massachusetts State Public Health Laboratory and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Any health care provider who suspects a person is infected with 2019 Novel Coronavirus should call the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to discuss testing, at (617) 983-6800.

Should I be tested for 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

Only those who have been in a place where 2019 Novel Coronavirus is occurring, or have had close contact with someone who has it, and are experiencing flu-like symptoms, should be tested.

What should I do if I have visited a place where 2019 Novel Coronavirus is occurring or if I had close contact with someone who has it?

As of February 3, 2020, if you have been in a place where 2019 Novel Coronavirus is occurring, or you have had close contact with someone who has the virus, you may be asked to partially or completely avoid contact with other people, depending on your likelihood of exposure. You should also:

- Monitor your health for 14 days after your last possible exposure.
- Watch for these signs and symptoms:
 - a. fever
 - b. coughing
 - c. shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Other early symptoms could be chills, body aches, sore throat, headache, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, and runny nose.
- If you develop **any of these symptoms**, call your healthcare provider.
- Before going to your medical appointment, be sure to tell your healthcare provider about your possible exposure to 2019 Novel Coronavirus.

Where can I learn more about the 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

For updated information, visit the DPH website: www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus.

More detailed information and additional guidance is available from the CDC at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>.

For questions

Contact your doctor, clinic, or local board of health (in the phonebook under Local Government).

Contact the DPH Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences at (617) 983-6800.

