



Town of Canton, Massachusetts
BOARD OF HEALTH
79 Pleasant Street
Canton, Massachusetts 02021
Tel.: (781) 821-5021
Fax: (781) 821-0337

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY REGARDING CORONAVIRUS

DATE: March 6, 2020
FROM: Julie E. Goodman, PhD, Board Member
Cindy Bonner, RN, BSN, Public Health Nurse
RE: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update and Local Efforts

I am writing to you to provide the latest update regarding a new Coronavirus, COVID-19, first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. I would also like to share the plans in place in Canton to address any local implications of this virus.

The Canton Board of Health and the Town of Canton have been preparing for emerging infectious diseases for many years. While COVID-19 is a new virus, the coordination, communication efforts, and infrastructure around our public health preparedness is firmly in place.

To date, there has been one confirmed case and two presumptive positive case (March 5, 2020) of COVID-19 in the state. According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), the risk to the public from COVID-19 remains low.

The Canton Board of Health is receiving regular updates from MDPH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on this rapidly evolving situation. The department is in regular contact with key town officials and local hospitals to discuss status reports, directives, and messaging for the community. In addition, the Board of Health is participating in webinars hosted by MDPH, which offer updates and guidance for local health departments, school officials, and other stakeholders in the communities.

The Board of Health is asking public and private businesses to provide helpful hygiene and sanitization measures, including hand sanitizer, hand washing, and wipes, as well as signage to reinforce prevention strategies, which includes reminding sick employees to stay home.

Town of Canton Plan to Address COVID-19

The Town is continuing to monitor this situation, prepare information to keep Canton residents informed, and provide any response that may be needed. We have an Emergency Preparedness plan in place that encompasses assessment and response to likely public health threats (including

pandemics) and other emergencies that might affect the community. This plan includes key stakeholders that will be consulted to form action plans and work collaboratively.

Regional Emergency Planning Committee (REPC). Canton is part of the Central Norfolk County Regional Emergency Planning Committee, which meets on a regular basis to plan and prepare for emergencies that impact our community and the immediate region. REPCs exist to enhance cooperative regional emergency planning, and address the Federal SARA Title III requirement that all communities have active Local Emergency Planning Committees, have procedures to deal with hazardous materials (“hazmat”) emergencies, meet right-to-know requirements, and encourage community awareness. REPCs play a vital role in preparing for emergencies and disasters.

Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). The MRC consists of medical and non-medical volunteers who contribute to local health initiatives, such as activities meeting the Surgeon General's priorities for public health, and supplement existing response capabilities in time of emergency. The CERT program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills

Emergency Preparedness Coalitions

The Canton Board of Health participates in an emergency preparedness coalition of 60 regional towns and communities called Region 4AB, which works collaboratively to implement CDC and MDPH Emergency Preparedness initiatives, and other regional and local public health efforts.

The Board of Health is also part of a sub-regional emergency preparedness coalition called Norfolk County 8 (NC-8), which is comprised of Health Departments in Canton, Dedham, Milton, Needham, Norwood, Walpole, Wellesley, and Westwood. NC-8 works together on various public health planning and emergency preparedness efforts. They regularly participate in trainings and drills for staff and Medical Reserve Corps volunteers in their communities.

What Can You Do?

There are steps you can take to avoid coming into contact with viruses such as COVID-19 and Influenza (which is rampant at this time). The Canton Board of Health still has a supply of flu vaccine, and it's not too late to get your shot.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases in general, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.

- CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).
- 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.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- If you plan on traveling, see CDC's specific guidance for travelers.

For information about handwashing, see CDC's Handwashing website

For information specific to healthcare, see CDC's Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings

Resources for More Information

Canton Board of Health website: <https://www.town.canton.ma.us/139/Board-of-Health>

Canton Public Schools: <https://www.cantonma.org>

MA Department of Public Health <https://www.mass.gov/guides/information-on-the-outbreak-of-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>

World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Please refer to the Town of Canton website and these resources for continued updates on COVID-19.