March 4, 2020

In order to address resident concerns, the Town plans to provide regular updates on the covid-19 coronavirus and best practices to stay healthy and avoid infection.

For today’s update, Cohasset officials reached out to the State Epidemiologist (the doctor who investigates infectious disease outbreaks), who shared the following information from the Massachusetts Department of Health.

From the Massachusetts Department of Public Health

We want to remind you that the risk to our residents for COVID-19 is low, but the risk for flu is high. It remains more likely that Massachusetts residents will contract the influenza virus than COVID-19.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread person-to-person either through close contact (people who are within 6 feet of each other for a prolonged period of time) and if respiratory droplets (produced from a cough or a sneeze) come into contact with someone’s eyes, nose or mouth. Although it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance, public health authorities are interviewing confirmed cases of COVID-19 in order to identify possible contacts. Contacts are assigned to a high, medium, low or no identifiable risk category and the appropriate public health measures applied. Based on the risk assessment criteria (see below), it is highly unlikely that any general notification to the public would be necessary.
CDC Guidance is as follows.

High risk is defined as:

- Living in the same household as, being an intimate partner of, or providing care in a non healthcare setting (such as a home) for a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection without using recommended precautions for home care and home isolation.

Medium risk is defined as:

- Close contact with a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection, and not having any exposures that meet a high-risk definition.
- On an aircraft, being seated within 6 feet (two meters) of a traveler with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection; this distance correlates approximately with 2 seats in each direction.
- Living in the same household as, an intimate partner of, or caring for a person in a non healthcare setting (such as a home) to a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection while consistently using recommended precautions for home care and home isolation.

Low risk is defined as:

- Being in the same indoor environment (e.g., a classroom, a hospital waiting room) as a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time but not meeting the definition of close contact.
- On an aircraft, being seated within two rows of a traveler with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 but not within 6 feet (2 meters) AND not having any exposures that meet a medium- or a high-risk definition.

No identifiable risk:

- Interactions with a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection that do not meet any of the high-, medium- or low-risk conditions above, such as walking by the person or being briefly in the same room.

Movement restrictions apply to contacts assessed as having either a high or medium risk exposure and the local public health department provides symptom monitoring oversight as appropriate in order to help prevent additional transmission in Massachusetts.
At this time there is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is circulating in our Massachusetts communities and the risk to residents remains low. It is important for people to remember that it is still flu and other respiratory viruses season. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed. We recommend everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- 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.
- 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.