

COVID-19 UPDATES

Town of Shelburne



Board of Health

November 16, 2020

Be a Local Hero: Quarantine When You Need To

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We, a group of Public Health Nurses serving Franklin County, are reaching out to readers to correct a misimpression we hear regularly from Franklin County residents regarding quarantine.

As should be clear from the state data (<https://www.publichealthwm.org/covid-19/data/Franklin>), there has been an increase in the number of COVID cases in Franklin County over the last two weeks. While we are still doing well in comparison to many parts of the world, we do need to keep our guard up and keep practicing safety through handwashing, mask wearing, and social distancing.

In Franklin County, as in the rest of Massachusetts, statistics reveal that people are younger and have significantly more close contacts while they are infectious, before being diagnosed, when compared to earlier in the pandemic. "Close contacts" are people the sick person was closer than 6 feet to for a cumulative 15 minutes over a 24 hour period while they were infectious.

People who are close contacts must quarantine for 14 days. Period.

With a novel virus like Coronavirus, understanding is always evolving, but the guidance on quarantine length has not changed in the past year. According to the Department of Public Health:

Close contacts without symptoms should be tested as soon as possible after they are notified of their exposure to COVID-19. The contact is required to quarantine for the full 14 days, even following a negative test result.

Close contacts that develop any symptom at any time during their quarantine period should be tested promptly. Testing should occur even if the person previously had a negative test result during their quarantine period.

Unlike the travel quarantine order, there is no ability to "test out" of a quarantine, because the person involved is not just a traveler, but has been determined to be a close contact of someone with COVID, which can take 14 days to develop after exposure. We hear from many people that they believe they can take a test and then be released from quarantine, but this is not true. You must wait until the 14 days have passed to make sure you do not become sick and infect other people.

Public health nurses working for local health departments in the region, acting on guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control, are working overtime to reach the many people exposed to people infected with COVID at social events, sporting events, workplaces, houses of worship and more. Once we reach these close contacts, we explain their risk and work with them to stay home. We are deeply grateful to the majority of people we talk to who are completely cooperative. If you get a call from a strange number, please pick up the phone – it may be a local public health nurse calling to explain that you have been identified as a close contact, and asking you to take the very important step of quarantining -- staying home and away from other people -- to stop the spread of COVID in our community.

Written by Lisa White, Melanie Zamojski, Meg Burcg, Megan Tudryn, Jennifer Hoffman, Connie Schwaiger and Jenny Potee, Public Health Nurses serving Franklin County