



TOWN OF WELLESLEY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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SPRING 2023 UPDATE

The Wellesley Health Department has prepared the following updated information for residents.

Ticks and Mosquitoes

Ticks

Ticks are found in wooded areas, high grass, or leaf litter. They are most active during the spring, summer and fall. Due to the mild winter, tick activity has already begun, and residents should take precautions when outdoors.

Protect yourself from ticks.

- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing (so ticks can be easily spotted), including long-sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into boots or socks.
- Use insect repellents. Use repellents containing at least 20% DEET on exposed skin and clothing. Reapply repellents as needed. (Always follow products labels).
- Use insecticides such as permethrin for greater protection. Permethrin can be used on clothing, but not on skin. One application to pants, socks, and shoes may be effective through several washings.
- [Do a daily tick check. Check hair, underarms, behind the ears and groin. Don't forget to check pets that have been outdoors!](#)
- Wash and dry clothes using the "hot" settings to kill any ticks present.

Tick FAQ

[What kinds of ticks carry Lyme and other diseases? What do they look like?](#)

[What should you do if you find a tick on your body? How do you properly remove a tick?](#)

[What should you do if you suspect you were bitten by a tick or you suspect you Lyme disease?](#)

Mosquitoes

In addition to being a nuisance, mosquitoes can transmit diseases like West Nile Virus and EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis). Mosquitoes breed in standing water and can be found in almost all outside areas. They are most active during dawn and dusk in the warmer months.

Protect yourself from mosquitoes-avoid bites by:

- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents with one of the active ingredients below. When used as directed, EPA-registered insect repellents are proven effective.

DEET

Picaridin

Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE)

Para-menthane-diol (PMD)

2-undecanone

- Use screens on windows and doors. Repair holes in screens to keep mosquitoes outdoors.
- Stop mosquitoes from laying eggs by removing standing water. Once a week, empty and turn over, cover, or throw out items that hold water, such as tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpots, or trash containers. Also, clear clogged rain gutters regularly. Check for water-holding containers both indoors and outdoors.
- Wellesley belongs to the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Commission (EMMCC) however the town does not subscribe to or support spraying to control the adult mosquito population. Instead, the focus is directed towards targeted larval control of breeding areas such as street catch basins. Read more about the EMMCC [HERE](#).

[Visit the Wellesley Health Department website for more information.](#)

Allergies/Asthma

Spring weather means allergy season. Most of the pollen that causes allergic reactions comes from trees, grasses, and weeds. These plants produce small, light, and dry pollen grains that travel by the wind. They then can find their way into your eyes, nose, and lungs, causing allergy symptoms if you have a pollen allergy. The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America recommends the following to prevent and treat seasonal allergies:

- **Start taking allergy treatments before pollen season begins.** Most allergy treatments work best when taken this way. This allows the treatments to prevent your body from releasing histamine and other chemicals that cause your symptoms.
- **Limit your outdoor activities when pollen counts are high.** This will cut down the amount of pollen allergen you inhale and help reduce your symptoms.
- **Keep windows closed during pollen season or peak pollen times.**
- **Use central air conditioning or air cleaners with a [CERTIFIED asthma & allergy friendly® filter](#) and/or HEPA filtration to reduce indoor airborne allergens** (including pollen that may enter your home through doors, windows, on your clothes, and on pets).

- **Wear sunglasses and cover your hair when going outside.** This will help keep pollen out of your eyes and off your hair.
- **Shower daily before going to bed.** This will remove pollen from your body and keep it off your bedding.
- **Wash bedding in hot, soapy water once a week.**
- **Limit close contact with pets that spend a lot of time outdoors.** Wipe furry animals off when they come inside or bathe them weekly (if appropriate).
- **Change and wash clothes worn during outdoor activities.**
- **Dry your clothes in a clothes dryer or inside, not on an outdoor line.**
- **Watch pollen counts and forecasts.** [Check out this website for local reports.](#)

Public Health Emergency Ends 5/11

The state's COVID-19 public health emergency will end on May 11, 2023, to align with the end of the federal public health emergency. What does this mean for residents of the Commonwealth?

1) Mask requirements inside healthcare facilities will be left up to individual hospitals, doctor's offices, senior care centers and other similar facilities.

2) Once the federal government is no longer purchasing or distributing COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, payment, coverage, and access may change. In order to prepare for that transition, partners across the U.S. Government (USG) are planning for and have been developing plans to ensure a smooth transition for the provision of COVID-19 vaccines and certain treatments as part of the traditional health care market, which will occur in the coming months.

3) Free at-home test kits via the U.S. Postal Service will no longer be available.

4) Massachusetts residents who get state-sponsored health insurance through MassHealth (which includes the state's Medicaid program) must actively re-enroll starting April 27th, 2023, if they want to keep their coverage. Previously, members were automatically re-enrolled. **If you received a notice saying you must renew, please respond by the due date listed in your renewal notice or your benefits might decrease or end.** Check the [MassHealth website](#) for more information.

5) The COVID SNAP benefit increase will be eliminated. However, MA will continue to offer SNAP recipients 40% of the previous increased federal allotment for three months (through June). Additionally, the universal free school meals program will keep operating through the rest of the academic year.

The Wellesley Health Department Social Work Team is able to support Wellesley residents in need of services. Call 781-235-0135 or [visit our website for more information](#).

COVID-19

COVID-19 remains active, and residents should still take precautions when necessary.

Vaccination

NEW! Everyone should receive at least ONE updated (bivalent) vaccine to be considered up to date on vaccination, even if you received an older (monovalent) booster.

New! People who are over 65 or 6 years and older and immunocompromised may opt to receive a second bivalent booster this spring.

NEW! You do not need to start or finish your primary series to get the updated vaccine/booster. For example, if you have never received **ANY** COVID vaccine, or you received only one original vaccine, you only need one updated (bivalent) vaccine to be considered up to date.

Visit the [CDC website](#) for complete vaccination information.

Getting vaccinated is the best measure you can take to protect yourself from severe illness due to COVID. Getting fully vaccinated as soon as possible offers the best protection against severe illness. Please consult with your health care provider for questions about getting vaccinated. COVID vaccinations are available at many local pharmacies and doctor's offices.

Masking

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health advises that individuals should wear a mask or face covering when indoors if they or someone in their household has a weakened immune system, or if they are at increased risk for severe disease because of their age or an underlying medical condition. [Visit the MDPH website for more information on masking](#).

Testing

The Health Department encourages residents to continue to test for COVID-19 as needed. For full information on testing, visit the MDPH website For more detailed information about the best way to use rapid at-home tests, including how to improve their accuracy by using repeated testing, see [this link to FDA guidance](#). [Visit the MDPH website for more information on testing](#).