



## TOWN OF WELLESLEY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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### SPRING 2024 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/or 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 have 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:

- 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](#)

([www.wellesleyma.gov/health](http://www.wellesleyma.gov/health))

## 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 allergy and asthma 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 with a damp cloth 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.](#)

## New Respiratory Disease Guidelines for Flu, Covid-19, RSV

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has updated its guidance in keeping with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations for respiratory viruses. COVID-19 guidance is now incorporated within the general guidance for common respiratory illnesses.

The Wellesley Board of Health supports these new guidelines, recognizing that all respiratory viruses pose a danger to medically vulnerable people, and that commonsense precautions can be protective. With widespread immunity and lower rates of hospitalization and death, there is no longer a need to isolate for 5 days after a positive test for COVID-19. However, if you have risk factors for severe COVID-19 and would benefit from treatment (such as Paxlovid), you should test for COVID-19 (using a home test or lab-based test) and talk to your health care provider. Home tests can take several days to become positive after symptom onset. Best practices to prevent the spread of infection to others when you have respiratory symptoms include hand hygiene and mask wearing.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has comprehensive webpages about COVID-19 with information, guidance, and an interactive dashboard with data from the Commonwealth.

## Covid-19 Vaccine Update

CDC recommends the 2023–2024 updated COVID-19 vaccines which were released last summer: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or Novavax, to protect against serious illness from COVID-19.

- Everyone aged 5 years and older should get 1 dose of the updated COVID-19 vaccine to protect against serious illness from COVID-19.
- Children aged 6 months–4 years need multiple doses of COVID-19 vaccines to be up to date, including at least 1 dose of the updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised may get additional doses of updated COVID-19 vaccine if recommended by their physician.

- New from CDC: people aged 65 years and older who received 1 dose of the updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna or Novavax) should receive 1 additional dose of the updated COVID-19 vaccine at least 4 months after the previous updated dose.

People who stay up to date by following the guidelines above have a lower risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19 than people who are unvaccinated or who have not completed the doses recommended for them by CDC.

## Measles

The CDC is reporting an increase in cases of measles, with 113 cases between December 1, 2023 and April 5, 2024. Most of the cases were among children and adolescents who had not been vaccinated for measles. [See the latest CDC alert here.](#)

The best protection against measles includes [getting vaccinated](#), taking extra caution if you are traveling (especially if you are [traveling abroad](#)), [recognizing signs and symptoms](#) and seeking medical help immediately if you think you have been exposed.

[Learn more about measles and the importance of getting vaccinated](#)

## Avian and Swine Origin Influenza (Avian Flu)

Outbreaks of avian influenza in dairy cows have been reported in several states. A farm worker in Texas who had close contact with cows has been diagnosed with avian influenza, but no other human cases have been detected in the US since 2022. Due to the low potential for human-to-human spread, health authorities consider the risk to people to be low. Some ways to protect yourself from avian flu include:

1. Consume only pasteurized milk and cheese
2. Cook chicken and eggs thoroughly before eating
3. Avoid close contact with sick or dead wild animals, especially birds
4. Wear protective equipment such as gloves and masks, and perform hand hygiene with soap and water if you have close contact with birds or their environment, including backyard chickens.