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DPH Public Health Advisory: Stay-at-Home Advisory for Individuals over 70 and for those with underlying health conditions; and Safe Practices for the General Public

This DPH Public Health Advisory is issued to provide guidance regarding Stay-at-Home and Safe Practices. The purpose is to take strong action to reduce the potential exposure to COVID-19 to those instances for basic food, health and well-being and for the provision of our essential services. Everyone in Massachusetts has an important role to play to slow the transmission of this virus. Every instance of potential exposure that can be eliminated is an important step for that individual and for our community.

This is Massachusetts Department of Public Health Advisory is in two parts. The first part is directed to those Massachusetts residents who are 70 years and older and those with underlying health conditions to strongly advise them to stay-at-home with the exception of essential trips for food, medicine, and focused time for exercise and fresh air. As this part of our population has significantly higher fatality rates with confirmed cases of this virus, this DPH Advisory in the strongest terms urges you to stay-at-home, unless necessary and to limit your exposure to this virus.

The second part is directed to the population as a whole both to those who are needed to keep our essential services operational and for all other residents of the Commonwealth. This part of the advisory also advises staying-at-home for all those who are not providing essential services as described in Executive Order #.

In every instance, this DPH Advisory requires the adherence for safe hygiene practices and vigilant social distancing.

Individuals in the Commonwealth should always practice social distancing, this means keeping a distance of 6 feet between you and the other person.

Staying home means:

- Only leave your home to address essential needs, get some fresh air and exercise, and if you do, avoid unnecessary contact with other individuals.

- You should still run essential errands such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy but should practice social distancing when shopping. If you are at high-risk, you should inquire about your local pharmacy/grocery store's alternative hours for high risk individuals.
- When going to the pharmacy you should fill your prescriptions for 90 days if possible; for some medications this is not allowed. If you are at high-risk, you should try to use a mail-order service.
- You can still go to the gas station, order and pick up take-out food and receive deliveries (e.g Amazon, UPS, Fedex).
- You can still go outside to get fresh air, however, you must practice social distancing while outside and avoid touching surfaces frequently touched by others.
- You are encouraged to use remote modes of communication such as telephone or video chat (e.g. Facetime, Skype, Facebook Messenger Video Chat) instead of visiting friends or family. This is especially true for a hospital, nursing home, skilled nursing facility, or other residential care setting..
- Non-essential medical care like eye exams, teeth cleaning, and elective procedures must be rescheduled.
- If possible, health care visits should be done remotely.
- Parents should not arrange play dates for children during this time.
- All individuals must eliminate close contact activities such as in pick-up sports games.

Individuals with any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 should remain in their homes, and request assistance with accessing essential services, such as obtaining food or medications.

Grocery Stores and Pharmacies

As indicated in the list of "COVID-19 Essential Services", grocery stores and pharmacies will remain open. Grocery stores and Pharmacies **must** provide alternative hours at least one hour every day for adults 60 years and older in order to limit their potential exposure. These hours must be posted and enforced by grocery stores and pharmacies.

Additionally, these establishments must include strategies to reduce COVID-19 exposure to their employees, including access to handwashing facilities, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, disinfecting wipes, and procedures to ensure both employees and customers remain at least six feet apart at all times. Employees who are sick should not report to work and if they do come to work they must be sent home.

Important note: If you or a family/household member does not feel safe at home, please call 1-800-799-7233 for live support. If you are unable to speak safely, you can log onto thehotline.org to chat online, or text LOVEIS to 22522.

If you or a family/household member have another concern or need regarding stay-at-home, please call 211.