Coronavirus or COVID-19 (formerly referred to as 2019 Novel Coronavirus) is a respiratory virus that is generally spread from person-to-person when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to the flu or other respiratory germs. To date, there has been one confirmed and one presumptive case of COVID-19 in Massachusetts, and **the immediate risk to Lowell and Massachusetts residents remains low at this time.**

Since January, as reported cases of COVID-19 began to climb around the globe, the Lowell Health Department has engaged in extensive efforts to ensure the City of Lowell's preparedness in the event of an outbreak. While this specific virus is new, the Lowell Health Department has a great deal of experience in preventing the spread of disease in our community, and is well prepared.

The Health Department has been in frequent communication with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and has participated in conference calls with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to remain informed of best practices for preparedness and developments related to the spread of the virus.

We understand that many residents may have questions regarding COVID-19 and how it may impact the Lowell community. Therefore, we encourage residents to review the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website](#) for up-to-date virus information, situation updates, and prevention and treatment method. There is also information available from the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health.](#)

<u>The symptoms of this infection include:</u>

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

<u>Protect yourself and others:</u>

- Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes with unwashed hands
- Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve (not with your hands)
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Clean and disinfect surface area frequently
- Stay home from work or school if you are sick

These recommendations are the same we encourage residents to stay healthy during any flu or respiratory virus.

Keep in mind that comparatively few children have tested positive for COVID-19. The majority of children and adolescents with COVID-19 (in China) had mild infections and recovered within 1-2 weeks.

Call your healthcare professional if you have a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have either been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. They will instruct you on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness.

Once again, the risk to Lowell and to Massachusetts remains low at this time and the Lowell Health Department is working closely with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to do everything necessary to protect the health of our residents and visitors. If you have any questions or concerns on this matter, please call the Lowell Health Department at 978-674-4010.