

Boston to start antibody study this week

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State House News Service

Boston plans to begin testing for antibodies to the coronavirus among asymptomatic residents in select neighborhoods in the city to get a better understanding of the prevalence of the virus.

Boston City Hall announced a partnership on Sunday with Massachusetts General Hospital to test 1,000 volunteers this week for both COVID-19 and antibodies to the virus as part of a study to evaluate the true level of exposure in the city. Outreach to residents for testing began Sunday in East Boston, Roslindale, and within the 02121 and 02125 zip codes in Dorchester.

The Centers for Disease Control estimate that 25 percent or more of the infected population could show no symptoms of COVID-19, but remain a risk to transmit the disease to others. As of Wednesday, the state reported that Boston had 6,744 documented cases of COVID-19, a rate of 970.4 per 100,000 people.

“It is our hope that by conducting this testing, we as a collective City will get a better understanding of the true prevalence of COVID-19 in our community,” Mayor Marty Walsh said in a statement. “The more we can expand our testing, the more we can learn how to use our medical resources more efficiently, and how we need to focus our current efforts to contain the virus.”

Testing for COVID-19 is done with a nasal swab, while antibody testing is done with blood drawn from a finger prick to determine whether the body is responding to infection or has

previously fought off the virus. Testing for residents contacted to be a part of the study will be free and on a first-come-first-serve basis.