

First Presumptive Positive Case of COVID-19 Identified by Massachusetts State Public Health Laboratory

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health yesterday announced its first presumptive positive case of COVID-19 since testing started Friday, February 28, at the State Public Health Laboratory. The woman is in her 20s and lives in Norfolk County. She recently traveled to Italy with a school group and was symptomatic. She is recovering at home.

The individual's test results came back positive just yesterday evening. Specimens will be sent to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and, if confirmed, this would be the second confirmed positive COVID-19 case in Massachusetts since the outbreak started in the US in January. The risk to the public from COVID-19 remains low in Massachusetts.

"We are grateful this individual is recovering," said Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. "We understand the concern this new virus is causing, and our state's ability to quickly test for the virus is a positive development. The risk to the public from COVID-19 remains low in Massachusetts."

Since January, Massachusetts public health officials have tested 12 residents, including the first confirmed case and now the first presumptive positive case. Of those 12, three people have been tested since Friday when the State Public Health Laboratory began testing patients for COVID-19, in accordance with CDC guidelines, after the US Food and Drug Administration gave its approval to use the test kits.

As of last week, 608 people have been subject to self-

quarantine in Massachusetts because of COVID-19. Of those, 377 people have completed monitoring and are no longer quarantined, while 231 are currently quarantined. This information will be updated each Wednesday.

Coronaviruses are respiratory viruses and are generally spread through respiratory secretions (droplets from coughs and sneezes) of an infected person to another person. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough and shortness of breath, and, in severe cases, pneumonia (fluid in the lungs). Information is still limited about how this novel coronavirus spreads. More information on COVID-19 is available at mass.gov/2019coronavirus.

There have been more than 60 U.S. cases of COVID-19 confirmed. Globally, more than 80,000 cases have been confirmed. Earlier today, the CDC reported four COVID-19-related deaths for a total of 6 deaths in the U.S.

Although the risk of the novel coronavirus to Massachusetts residents remains low, and the risk of the flu is high, people are advised to take many of the same steps they do to help prevent colds and the flu, including:

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes and face.
- Clean things that are frequently touched (like doorknobs and countertops) with household cleaning spray or wipes.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow.
- Stay home when feeling sick.
- Get a flu shot.

Clinicians who have patients they think may have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must contact DPH via the 24/7 EPI line (617-983-6800).

The State Lab has an adequate supply of test kits from the CDC

for testing. The anticipated turnaround of test results from the State Lab is 24 hours, depending on testing volume.

Individuals who are in voluntary self-quarantine continue to be monitored by their local boards of health. DPH will release updated statewide monitoring data weekly, beginning Wednesday, March 4.

People who have recently traveled from an area with widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19 and who have symptoms of the disease (fever, cough, shortness of breath) should reach out to their healthcare provider and call ahead before going to a healthcare facility.

For more information on COVID-19 visit mass.gov/2019coronavirus.