



# News Release

## Massachusetts Department of Public Health

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### For Immediate Release

## Massachusetts Department of Public Health Offers

### Summertime COVID Safety Guidance

BOSTON (June 12, 2020) - With the arrival of summer weather, and as COVID-19 related restrictions on daily activities begin to lift, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) reminds residents of the recommended precautions to keep families, including young children, safe this summer.

#### Prevent Tick Bites

Ticks can make you sick when they bite you. They are most commonly found in grassy, brushy, or wooded areas. They only attach when you come into direct contact with them — they cannot jump or fly. Follow these steps if you live, work, or spend time in areas where ticks are present:

- Check yourself for ticks once a day — it's the single most important thing you can do.
- Use repellents that contain DEET on your exposed skin and those that contain permethrin on your clothes.
- When walking or hiking, stick to main pathways and the center of trails if you can. Brushing against tall grass and bushes will increase your exposure to ticks.
- Weather permitting, wear long-sleeved, light-colored shirts and long pants tucked into socks. This will help keep ticks away from your skin and make it easier to spot ticks on your clothing.

Because dogs and horses are particularly susceptible, talk to your veterinarian about the best ways to protect your animals from tick-borne disease.

## Prevent Mosquito Bites

The 2019 mosquito season was an active season for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in Massachusetts. This mosquito-borne illness appears generally in 2-3 year cycles, traditionally peaking during August.

While the risk for human infection of EEE or West Nile Virus won't happen until later this summer, people have an important role to play in protecting themselves from these illnesses which can be very serious. To prepare for mosquito season:

- Drain standing water in and around your house or yard to prevent mosquito breeding.
- Repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- Use a mosquito repellent with an EPA-registered ingredient according to the directions on the label.
- Wear clothing to reduce exposed skin when weather permits.

To learn more, watch this [3-minute video](#) narrated by State Epidemiologist Dr. Catherine Brown about the mosquito-borne virus and how to protect yourself and your family. For more information about preventing mosquito and tickborne illness, visit [www.mass.gov/mosquitoesandticks](http://www.mass.gov/mosquitoesandticks).

## Water and Pool Safety

Drowning is a leading cause of death among young children, both nationally and in Massachusetts, with backyard pools posing the highest risk for children under the age of 5. To help prevent water-related injury and drowning:

- Children should be supervised in and around water at all times.
- Whenever infants and toddlers are in or around water, including the bathtub, an adult should be within an arm's length at all times providing "touch supervision."
- Completely separate the house and play area of the yard from the pool area with a fence. Consider automatic door locks or alarms to prevent access.
- Remove floats, balls, and other toys from the pool after use so that children are not tempted to reach for them. After the children are done swimming, secure the pool so they cannot get back in.
- Keep rescue equipment (such as a shepherd's hook or life preserver) and a phone by the pool.
- For children who cannot swim, use a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. Do not use toys such as "water wings" or "noodles" in place of life jackets. These are not designed to keep swimmers safe.

In public swimming areas:

- Be sure to practice social distancing from others before and after you swim and wear a cloth face covering or mask when you cannot maintain 6 feet of distance from others.
- Select swimming sites that have lifeguards whenever possible, and swim only in designated swimming areas.
- Always swim with a buddy.

## Window Safety

Falls are the leading cause of injury to children, and falls from windows involving young children are especially serious. Window falls are preventable. Screens are not strong enough to protect children from falling out of windows. In order to prevent window falls, parents and caregivers should:

- Keep furniture – and anything a child can climb on – away from windows.
- Open windows from the top, not the bottom, when possible and lock all unopened doors and windows.
- Be sure children are always supervised.
- Install quick-release window guards which can be found in most hardware stores.

Additional tips on preventing falls among children can be found on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [fall prevention website](#).

To learn more about childhood injury prevention, visit the [DPH injury prevention and control program website](#).

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