



**Town of Athol
Board of Health**

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIRST COVID-19 CASES CONFIRMED IN ATHOL

ATHOL – On Sunday, March 29, the Town’s Health Department received confirmation from its regional health network that two Athol residents have tested positive for COVID-19.

While no further details can be released, any party that has had probable exposure to a positive case will be contacted directly by a public health nurse for follow-up. The Town is a member of the Montachusett Public Health Network (MPHN) which provides nursing services to regional communities including Athol. Due to the Coronavirus, the MPHN has added nursing staff to monitor suspect and confirmed cases and to identify and investigate close contacts.

The Town recognizes that there may also be area residents that are in home quarantine who are monitored daily while awaiting test results, however, the Health Department only receives notification for confirmed COVID-19 cases.

“We have all known it was only a matter of time before we received this news,” said Town Manager Shaun A. Suhoski. “The disease is here and among us. Our best defense is to stay home whenever possible, practice good hygiene by washing hands frequently and covering coughs or sneezes, and by following social distancing guidelines when you need to be out.”

Health Agent Deborah Vondal noted that the Town itself continues to follow guidance and orders issued by the Governor of the Commonwealth, state Dept. of Public Health and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“We ask all citizens to be vigilant in your own actions and to focus on what you can do to help mitigate the spread of this virus during these unprecedented times,” said Vondal, offering the following advice:

- Protect yourself by following public health advice about keeping your hands clean, and covering coughs and sneezes.
- Stay home if you are sick.

- Protect others who are most at risk of COVID-19 by keeping your distance from people (at least six feet away from others), especially those who are older, and people living with chronic health conditions.
- If you are outside, avoid crowds.
- Don’t shake hands or hug.
- Stay connected to friends and loved ones by phone or through other technology.
- Get information from trusted sources. Visit www.mass.gov for the latest news, case counts and lab testing results. To get alerts sent to your smart phone or email: text “COVIDMA” to 888-777.
- Local updates are posted to the Town’s Web site www.athol-ma.gov.

You are also encouraged to take care of your emotional health and help others do the same. If you need emotional support during these stressful times, call 2-1-1 and choose the “CALL2TALK” option. There are additional resources on the Department of Public Health website.

Things You Can Do

Self -Observation:

- Remain alert for fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.
- If you feel feverish: take your temperature, self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice from your health care provider or nearest urgent care center to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

Take care of yourself and each other as we live through these stressful times:

- Take a break from constant news monitoring about COVID-19
- Take care of your body, eat healthy, get some physical activity, and enough sleep. Deep breathing, stretching and meditating helps. Take time to unwind and do activities that you enjoy. Connect with others (practicing safe distancing) and discuss your concerns and how you’re feeling with people you trust.

STAY HOME STOP THE SPREAD