



The State of New Hampshire
Department of Environmental Services



Robert R. Scott, Commissioner

**NHDES Watershed Management Bureau (WMB)
COVID-19 FAQs & Information for the General Public**

May 13, 2020

The NHDES Watershed Management Bureau understands that there are several questions and concerns about how the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) may affect our waters. While there is little known on this subject, NHDES continuously checks for updates and new information on COVID-19. The virus is spread primarily via respiratory droplets when in close contact with people, and not via recreational water. Many of these questions are addressed through the [CDC's website on Water and COVID-19 FAQs](#). Here we provide a list of resources and guidance provided by numerous organizations across the region, U.S.A. and the World.

Can coronavirus be spread between people gathering in water outdoors? Yes, there is strong evidence that if people are in close contact with each other (within six feet) they may spread the virus via the small respiratory droplets that occur when we talk, cough or sneeze. There is no evidence that the virus can spread from water to a person.

Can coronavirus survive in our lakes and ponds? There is no evidence that the virus is able to survive and infect people in natural water bodies, in either marine or freshwater environments.

Can I catch COVID-19 from feces of other people, while swimming? There is no evidence that the virus is able to survive and infect people via feces in recreational water. The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated; "While initial investigations suggest the virus may be present in feces in some cases, to date, there have not been reports of fecal-oral transmission of COVID-19. Additionally, there is no evidence to date on the survival of the COVID-19 virus in water or sewage. WHO is assessing ongoing research on the ways COVID-19 is spread and will continue to share new findings on this topic."

Can I go to the beach in New Hampshire this summer? Currently, public beaches are closed in order to discourage gatherings of people in close contact with each other. **[Stay at Home 2.0 states that Seacoast Beaches will remain closed \(effective until May 31 or until further notice\).](#)**

Can COVID-19 spread through pools, spas, and splash pads? There is no evidence that the virus is able to survive and spread to people through water, including "pools, hot tubs, spas, or water play areas" according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Proper operation, maintenance and disinfection of such facilities should inactivate the virus in water. [More considerations and details are available from CDC.](#)

Can I swim, boat or otherwise recreate on New Hampshire waterbodies? Yes, you can recreate in and on waters if you understand and follow the guidance on how to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The opening of the New Hampshire economy will be decided by Governor Sununu, however it is encouraged to recreate outdoors as long as social distancing is followed and you are taking the necessary steps suggested by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

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Can I still drop off water samples at the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Public Health Lab (PHL)?

Yes, but with some new guidance on proper drop-off procedures:

- **Go to the main entrance door at NHDES on 29 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH. Under the portico there is a table and instructions to call lab staff who will come collect the sample while maintaining social distancing. Please remain at the entrance until your sample is collected. For questions, please contact the [Public Health Lab](#).**

Can I still sample for my volunteer water quality monitoring program(s)? Please contact the specific NHDES Program Coordinator you work with for more information about any samples you may be collecting as a volunteer. See related Programs in the [Watershed Management Bureau](#). Many programs are reducing sampling efforts and some programs will have drop-off bins/coolers for samples collected by volunteers.

[What is the CDC's guidance for preventing the spread of COVID-19?](#)

1. Know how the virus spreads. The virus is spread mainly from person to person via respiratory droplets and close contact, and second, from touching common surfaces that are contaminated.
2. Avoid close contact. The virus spreads primarily from people who are in close contact (within 6 feet for 10 minutes or more), especially when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes.
3. If you feel sick, stay home and avoid contact with others.
4. If you feel well, stay home as much as possible except for essential trips and meetings.
5. Practice physical distancing by keeping six feet between you and others, and avoid large gatherings (greater than 10 people), until further notice from the State.
6. Be aware when you touch your face, and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
7. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom, before preparing or eating food, and after touching common surfaces. If soap and water are not available, use at least 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
8. Clean frequently touched surfaces often with mild soap and water. If needed, you can then follow with disinfectants that contain either adequate concentrations of bleach or are minimum 70% alcohol-based. Note that you can easily make your own disinfectant for surface cleaning by mixing 4 tsp bleach per 1 quart of water.
9. If you need to leave your home, [wear a cloth face covering](#). The NH Department of Health and Human Services recommends all Granite Staters wear cloth face coverings when outside of the home to help slow the spread of COVID-19. This advice is based on new data about how COVID-19 can spread before a person has any symptoms. A mask helps protect others around you if you are infected and don't know it.

Where can I learn more about COVID-19? There are several resources available. Please see the following links.

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Resources and Guides on the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19):

State of New Hampshire

- [New Hampshire State Government, Department of Health and Human Services \(Stay at Home 2.0 effective until May 31\)](#).
- [New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 Website](#)
- [New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services COVID-19 website](#)
- [New Hampshire State Parks Response to COVID-19](#)
- [New Hampshire State Park Guidance](#)
- [NHDES Wastewater Engineering Bureau \(WWEB\) COVID-19 FAQs & Information for Public Wastewater Systems](#)
- [NHDES Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau \(DWGB\) COVID-19 Answers to FAQs & Information for Public Water Systems](#)
- [NH Emergency Meeting Guidance](#)

General COVID-19 Information (call 2-1-1)

- [U.S. Coronavirus Website](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [World Health Organization COVID-19 \(WHO\)](#)
- [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Guidance on Coronavirus](#)
- [EPA's Virtual Meeting Guidance](#)

COVID-19 Information Related to Water & Wastewater

- [CDC Water Transmission and COVID-19](#)
- [CDC's Considerations for Public Pools, Hot Tubs, and Water Playgrounds During COVID-19](#)
- [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Guidance on Coronavirus and Drinking Water and Wastewater](#)
- [Association of State Drinking Water Administrators COVID-19 \(ASDWA\)](#)
- [Water Environment Federation](#)
- [Water Information Sharing and Analysis Center COVID-19 \(Water ISAC\)](#)
- [The Water Research Foundation Coronavirus Research Update \(WRF\)](#)
- [Blue Ocean Society](#)
- [Surfrider Foundation](#)
- [NH LAKES](#)
- [New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission \(NEIWPC\)](#)
- [NH Water Pollution Control Association](#)

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