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Westport Board of Health
COVID-19 Update
February 26, 2021

Case Status:

Total number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases of Westport residents on the state's weekly city & town report of February 24, 2021 was **1336** - up 20 cases in a week. Westport has finally moved down one risk level to **YELLOW** for the first time since October 23rd. Although the Town remains above the statewide average on case and positivity metrics, the progress has been very encouraging. The rolling 14-day incidence rate of cases has decreased to **26.4/100,000 (down from 42.2 last week)**. Please visit the state's [interactive data dashboard](#) for more details.

Testing Data:

22,614 COVID tests have been performed on Westport residents to date, based on the state's February 24th weekly report. There were **68** positive tests out of 1437 done in the last 14 days for a positivity rate of **4.73%**. The statewide positivity rate declined to 2.15%.

COVID Vaccine Update:

- **Dartmouth High School Clinic Reminder:** All residents who received a first dose of Pfizer vaccine at Dartmouth High on February 6th should return on Saturday, Feb 27th at the same time as their initial appointment to receive the second dose. Remember to bring your vaccine card with you. Westport Board of Health staff will again be assisting at the clinic.
- **Vaccines for eligible Senior & Affordable Housing residents in Westport:** The Health Department has partnered with qualified senior/affordable housing properties in town to set up vaccination clinics for eligible residents and staff. Once vaccine is allocated, scheduling details will be provided to residents of each complex. We expect to begin at Greenwood Terrace next week.
- **Need a vaccine appointment?** All persons age 65+, those with 2 or more qualified medical conditions, and anyone eligible in Phase 1 or 2 who needs the vaccine can go to www.mass.gov/COVIDVaccineMap, which provides a location map for individuals to find nearby vaccination locations. You can also utilize the [VaxFinder](#) tool to find vaccination locations and other information such as available appointments, site instructions, and directions.
- **Dartmouth Circuit City Mass Vaccination Site:** This new mass vaccination site opened on Wednesday, February 24, at the former Circuit City location in Dartmouth and is operated by Curative. Check vaxfinder.mass.gov for scheduling an appointment. As with other mass vax sites, your best bet is to try on Thursday mornings when new slots are posted.
- **Telephone support for persons without internet access** who wish to make vaccine appointments at public clinics is now available by **calling 211**.

- Local pharmacies and mass vaccination sites are also providing vaccine to eligible residents. The closest sites are CVS and Walgreens in Fall River. Bristol Community College is another site. For all of the above clinics, go to: vaxfinder.mass.gov

Other COVID-19 News:

Move to Step 2 of Phase II will be effective March 1, for all cities and towns. This includes the following updates to businesses, activities and capacities:

- Indoor performance venues such as concert halls, theaters, and other indoor performance spaces will be allowed to reopen at 50% capacity with no more than 500 persons
- Indoor recreational activities with greater potential for contact (laser tag, roller skating, trampolines, obstacle courses) will be allowed to reopen at 50% capacity
- Capacity limits across all sectors with capacity limits will be raised to 50% and exclude employees
- Restaurants will no longer have a percent capacity limit and will be permitted to host musical performances; six-foot social distancing, limits of six people per table and 90-minute limits remain in place

Residents must continue to wear masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and are encouraged to avoid contact outside of their immediate households. The Travel Advisory and other public health orders remain in effect.

Gathering Changes and Phase IV Start Proposed for March 22: If public health metrics continue to improve, Massachusetts will move into Step 1 of Phase IV of the state's reopening plan on March 22nd. Also effective on March 22, gathering limits for event venues and in public settings will increase to 100 people indoors and 150 people outdoors. Outdoor gatherings at private residences and in private backyards will remain at a maximum of 25 people, with indoor house gatherings remaining at 10 people.

Additionally, dance floors will be permitted at weddings and other events only, and overnight summer camps will be allowed to operate this coming summer. Exhibition and convention halls may also begin to operate, following gatherings limits and event protocols. Other Phase IV sectors must continue to remain closed.

Variants in Massachusetts: Surveillance data so far has identified UK and South African variant cases without any recent travel in Massachusetts. It is critical to do everything possible to keep variants of concern from becoming widespread. The public health risk reduction measures remain the same. Individuals must continue to wear masks or face coverings while out in public, maintain 6-foot social distancing, stay home when you are sick, and get tested if you have symptoms or are identified as a close contact

Updated mask guidance: The CDC has updated its guidance around mask wearing, by emphasizing the importance of a tight fit and improved filtration. One way to achieve that is to 'double mask' by wearing a cloth mask over a surgical mask. [CDC Mask guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/s0505-cdc-mask.html).

MassHealth Expands Vaccine-Related Transportation for its Members:

MassHealth is providing free transportation to vaccine appointments to anyone that has any type of MassHealth coverage or the Health Safety Net. This includes people with

MassHealth Limited, Children's Medical Security Program (CMSP) and MassHealth Family Assistance (FA). In addition, members can request transportation services directly through MassHealth's Customer Service, rather than needing to request services through a health care provider.

If you have MassHealth or the Health Safety Net, you (or a caregiver) can call your health plan or MassHealth directly to schedule free transportation at 800-841-2900 (TTY: 800-497-4648).

COVID Testing: Testing for COVID-19 is widely available in Massachusetts. You should get tested if you have any symptoms or have been a close contact of someone who tested positive. Find a test site [here](#). Free testing is also available in Fall River and New Bedford through the [Stop the Spread](#) initiative.

Town COVID Updates:

- **Town Hall and Annex** – Open to the public BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. Service by phone, mail, outdoor drop box, or online is recommended. Face masks are required for in-person appointments.
- **The Westport Food Pantry is at the Westport Grange, 931 Main Rd.** Next food pantry pick-up will be on Monday from 9 am to noon. Monetary donations can be sent to the Friends of the Westport Council on Aging (FWCOA) Attn. Food Pantry, PO Box 4228, Westport, MA 02790. Food and grocery gift card donations are accepted on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings.
- **Pet Food Pantry** – Donations of dry or canned dog or cat food, (maximum weight 25#), as well as treats, toys, cat litter and puppy training pads are accepted. Please drop off your pet supply donation at the Grange, during its regular donation times.
- **Schools** - The Westport Community Schools now reports weekly updates on COVID cases at <https://westportschools.org/covid-19/>.

How to Help Out

The Need for Blood Donations Continues & Recovered COVID-19 Donors Can Help Save Lives

The Red Cross is seeking people who are fully recovered from the new coronavirus to sign up to donate plasma to help current COVID-19 patients. People who have fully recovered from COVID-19 have antibodies in their plasma that can attack the virus. This convalescent plasma is being evaluated as treatment for patients with serious or immediately life-threatening COVID-19 infections. Regular blood donations are also needed. To make an appointment to donate, please visit www.RedCrossBlood.org.

In closing:

The light at the end of the tunnel is growing brighter every day thanks not only to the rising number of vaccinations, but also to the hard work of so many people across Westport. But we still must remain vigilant by wearing masks, social distancing and washing hands - even if you have received one or two doses of the vaccine. Thank you for your continued cooperation and stay safe everyone!

Matthew J. Armendo, Director