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

Case Status:

Total number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases of Westport residents on the state's weekly city & town report of March 25, 2021 was **1428** – an increase of 25 cases since last week. Westport has stayed at the **YELLOW** risk level for five weeks now, and both our incidence and test positivity rates stayed relatively stable. The rolling 14-day incidence rate of cases was **19.6/100,000**. Visit the state's [interactive data dashboard](#).

Testing Data:

25,220 COVID tests have been performed on Westport residents to date, based on the state's March 25th weekly report. There were **52** positive tests out of 1225 done in the last 14 days for a positivity rate of **4.24%** - up very slightly from last week. The statewide positivity rate increased somewhat to 2.01%.

Westport Vaccination Data

As of March 25, 2021, at least **5373 or 32%** of Westport residents are fully or partially vaccinated against COVID-19, either through a Westport sponsored clinic or through any one of the other vaccine sites. That means another **460** individuals received a vaccine shot in the last week. Vaccine reports, including one with the town level data, can be found [here](#).

Westport Vaccine Clinics this week: The BOH completed an additional 25 vaccinations from the allotment of 100 J&J vaccines received unexpectedly last week. The BOH is not currently eligible to receive any more vaccine (except for second doses), however we hope to partner with other local providers to continue serving eligible Westport residents, including those on the waitlist at the COA and town employees.

COVID Vaccine Update:

- **NEW! Vaccine for Veterans: Saturday, March 27, from 9am until all vaccines doses have been given out at** New Hope Christian Church, 1436 Grand Army of the Republic Hwy, Swansea, MA 02777. Any Veteran, whether enrolled or not enrolled in VA healthcare. If the Veteran is not enrolled in VA healthcare, they need to bring a copy of their DD-214 and picture ID and a completed 10-10EZ enrollment form - all of which the VA staff will keep. All attendees must bring a picture ID. The 10-10 EZ form can be downloaded here: <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-10EZ-fillable.pdf>
- **NEW! Veteran Vaccine Eligibility:** President Biden recently signed a law that allows ALL veterans, their spouses and caregivers, and CHAMPVA recipients to receive a COVID vaccine at the VA, regardless of eligibility for VA health care. <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5649>

- **Vaccine Eligibility Timeline:**

- **March 22nd:** Residents 60+ and certain workers
- **April 5th:** Residents 55+ and residents with one certain medical condition
- **April 19th:** General public ages 16 years of age and older

The full timeline is available [HERE](#).

- **Reserve your spot in line for vaccines:** All residents can pre-register to book an appointment at a mass vaccination site at mass.gov/COVIDVaccine. Appointments will be offered based on eligibility and available appointments nearby. Once you sign up for preregistration, you'll receive weekly status updates. You can opt out at any time if you find an appointment elsewhere.
- **Second Dose Appointments:** Individuals who cannot schedule their second dose at the same site as their first dose, may schedule a second dose at a mass vaccination site (with the same type of vaccine) online through the same process as scheduling a first dose. If you are unable to access an appointment online, you may also call the mass vaccination site vendor. Contact information is listed for each site on their [Vaxfinder](#) page. This option is only available and is limited in supply. It is only available for people who just require a second dose.
- **Guidelines for Fully Vaccinated Individuals:**
<https://www.mass.gov/guidance/guidance-for-people-who-are-fully-vaccinated-against-covid-19>
- **Homebound Vaccination Program:** Beginning March 29, the state is launching a homebound vaccination program. Communities had the option to opt in to the state mobile clinic program or offer a locally tailored program. The Westport Board of Health has opted to provide this service for our community through the Fire Department EMTs, who have already vaccinated 110 previously identified homebound resident. However, any homebound individual who has not received a vaccination yet can call **1-833-983-0485** to be screened for eligibility for in-home vaccination. The registration phone line is open Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 5 PM and has representatives who speak English and Spanish, as well as translation services available in 100+ languages. Details [HERE](#)
- **Call 211 - telephone support for persons without internet access** who need help making vaccine appointments at public clinics.

Other COVID-19 News:

Travel Advisory - On March 22 the Massachusetts Travel Order was replaced with a [Travel Advisory](#). The Travel Order form and map of lower risk states are no longer in effect. All visitors entering Massachusetts, including returning residents, are advised to quarantine for 10 days upon their arrival.

Exemptions: Travelers with a negative COVID test, residents returning within 24 hours of leaving the state, critical infrastructure workers, and fully vaccinated travelers who have no COVID symptoms.

Phase IV, Step 1 and Gathering Changes:

All communities in Massachusetts moved into Step 1 of Phase IV of the state's reopening plan this past Monday. For details, visit: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-when-can-my-business-reopen>

Also effective on March 22, gathering limits for event venues and in public settings increased to 100 people indoors and 150 people outdoors. Outdoor gatherings at private residences remain at a max of 25 people, with the indoor max at 10 people.

The following must continue to remain closed until Phase IV, Step 2:

- ✓ Amusement parks, theme parks, indoor and outdoor waterparks and ball pits
- ✓ Street festivals and parades and agricultural festivals
- ✓ Road races and other large, outdoor organized amateur or professional group athletic events
- ✓ Bars, dance clubs and nightclubs
- ✓ Beer gardens, breweries, wineries and distillates not providing seated food service

COVID-19 Variants in Massachusetts: Surveillance data indicates that B.1.1.7 (UK variant) is widespread in Massachusetts and is circulating within communities. Data has also identified B.1.351 and P.1 cases without any recent travel. It is critical to do everything possible to keep variants of concern from becoming more widespread.

The best defense against variants of concern is to prevent the spread of COVID. This includes wearing a mask, social distancing, avoiding groups, staying home when you are sick, getting tested if you have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID, and getting vaccinated when it is your turn.

Updated mask guidance: The CDC has updated its guidance around mask wearing, by emphasizing the importance of a tight fit and improved filtration. You can 'double mask' by wearing a cloth mask over a surgical mask. [CDC Mask guidance](#).

COVID Testing: Testing for COVID-19 is widely available. 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, which has been extended through June.

COVID related funeral expenses: FEMA will provide financial assistance for COVID-19-related funeral expenses incurred after January 20, 2020.
<https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/economic/funeral-assistance>

Town COVID Updates:

- **NEW! Veteran's Mobile Food Pantry – Thursday, April 1 from 1 to 3 pm** at the Town Hall Annex. Pre-registration is required due to limited supply. Please register by calling Carol Freitas, Westport VSO, at 508-636-1028. Volunteers and extra donations also needed; please call Carol.
- **Town Election – Tuesday, April 13, 2021.** Polls open 10 am to 8 pm. Be sure to wear a mask and keep 6 ft. distance from others. Currently, no-excuse voting by mail has been extended by the state law until June 30, 2021. If you are applying to vote by mail in this town election, use the [Vote by Mail Application](#) (PDF).
- **Annual Town Meeting –** Will be held outdoors starting at 9 am on Saturday, June 5th behind the Westport High School.
- **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. In preparation for Easter, the pantry will be giving out 150 frozen hams to Westport residents thanks to a generous donation from the Friends of the Westport Council on Aging. Monetary donations can be sent to the FWCOA Attn. Food Pantry, PO Box 4228, Westport, MA 02790. Food and grocery gift card donations are accepted on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings. You may also recycle any Westport Heart fundraisers signs at the Grange.
- **NEW Website for the Westport Food Pantry** - www.westportfoodpantry.com. This website will be up shortly and have information, pictures, ways to donate, and how to volunteer. It will also be linked to the Town of Westport website.
- **Food Pantry Thank Yous!** Thank you to **Dartmouth Awning** for installing a green awning at the entrance to the Westport Food Pantry, to the **Westport School District** for doing food drives and to **AGS HVAC Services, LLC**, a local Westport company, for donating the supplies and labor to install some mini splits to provide heat, air conditioning and better dehumidifier capabilities.
- **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/>.

In closing:

With level of cases and test positivity in town, I remind everyone not to let our guard down. Continue 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

P.S. One non-COVID update – The Westport Transfer Station will be closed on Easter Sunday, April 4th.