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Westport Board of Health
COVID-19 Update
March 5, 2021

Case Status:

Total number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases of Westport residents on the state's weekly city & town report of March 4, 2021 was **1354** - up 18 cases in a week. Westport has stayed at the **YELLOW** risk level for two weeks in a row. Although the Town remains above the statewide average on case and positivity metrics, the downward trend has continued. The rolling 14-day incidence rate of cases has decreased to **18.3/100,000 (down from 26.4 last week)**. Please visit the state's [interactive data dashboard](#) for more details.

Testing Data:

23,326 COVID tests have been performed on Westport residents to date, based on the state's March 4th weekly report. There were **49** positive tests out of 1427 done in the last 14 days for a positivity rate of **3.43%**. The statewide positivity rate declined to 1.93%.

COVID Vaccine Update:

- **Vaccines for K-12 Educators, Child Care Workers and K-12 School Staff:** Beginning March 11th, all K-12 educators, child care workers and K-12 school staff will be eligible to schedule appointments for the COVID-19 vaccine. Educators may book appointments at all 170 sites currently open to eligible residents by visiting www.mass.gov/covidvaccinemap. The state is working to designate specific days at the seven mass vaccination sites for educators to get their shots. More details will be released soon. It may still take a month for all eligible individuals to get a first appointment.
- **Dartmouth High School Clinic Reminder:** All residents who received a first dose of Pfizer vaccine at Dartmouth High on February 13th should return on Saturday, March 6th 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 first clinic for Greenwood Terrace residents and staff was held on March 4th in partnership with the Westport Fire and Health Dept. Another round of vaccination of homebound residents was also initiated. If additional vaccine is allocated, we expect to set up additional targeted clinics.
- **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.
- **Johnson & Johnson vaccine (also referred to as Jannsen):** Massachusetts is receiving only one shipment of 58,000 doses for the month of March. These doses

have been allocated – primarily to hospitals and health systems. The Administration does not expect to be able to order more J&J doses until early April.

- **Dartmouth Circuit City Mass Vaccination Site:** This new mass vaccination site is now open 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 early 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 other sites are also providing vaccine to eligible residents. The closest sites are CVS and Walgreens in Fall River and New Bedford. You can also check the Fall River Stop & Shop and Bristol Community College sites. For all of the above clinics, go to: vaxfinder.mass.gov

Other COVID-19 News:

Vaccine Attitude Survey: The state has developed a survey to assess vaccination attitudes and the degree of vaccine hesitancy among people in Massachusetts. We encourage you to take the survey by March 12.

- Requirements: must be 18 years or older and living in or a resident of Massachusetts.
- Time to complete: 10-15 minutes
- Data collection: completely anonymous
- Link to the Survey: <https://redcap.link/MAvaccinesurvey>

Importance of Second Dose for Pfizer and Moderna Vaccines: The CDC has stated that two doses of coronavirus vaccine protect people better against coronavirus variants than just one dose. To maximize your protection and reduce the chance of variants taking hold in the US, the Health Department strongly encourages all residents who get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine to make sure to keep their second dose appointment. If you are unable to do so, please cancel ahead of time so someone else can take your slot. If you are unable to make your scheduled second dose appointment, try to get another one as soon as possible within 6 weeks of the first dose. The mass vax sites do have a limited number of second dose appointments. You may schedule your second dose at a mass vaccination site (with the same 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](https://vaxfinder.mass.gov) page. This option is only available for individuals who cannot schedule their second dose at the same site as their first dose and is limited in supply. It is only available for people who just require a second dose.

Move to Step 2 of Phase III was 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 are now allowed to reopen at 50% capacity with no more than 500 persons
- Capacity limits across all sectors with capacity limits has been raised to 50% and exclude employees
- Restaurants no longer have a percent capacity limit and can 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.

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](#).

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. 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. You may also recycle any Westport Have a Heart fundraisers signs at the Grange
- **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:

The signs are encouraging, but we must not let down our guard. 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