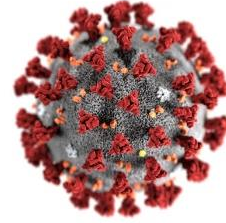




Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update December 23, 2021



I'm sharing a brief update today ahead of the holiday weekend, which includes our latest COVID data for Westfield.

Unfortunately, today New Jersey set another single-day record for COVID-19 cases for a second straight day, with 15,482 confirmed positive tests – nearly 6,000 cases more than yesterday's record of 9,711 positive tests. This, of course, does not include the positive home tests that are continuing to multiply. Statewide hospitalizations are also on the rise, surpassing 2,200 for the first time in more than eight months.

The state's seven-day average for new confirmed cases is up 100% from a week ago and up 386% from a month ago. The statewide transmission rate is 1.23.

Regional Health Officer Megan Avallone reports that the entire state continues to show a high level of COVID activity. Locally, there were 165 cases identified in Westfield between December 16 and December 22. Due to a temporary issue with the reporting system, we were unable to access the age ranges this week, but will provide that information in our detailed monthly report in early January.

Statewide, vaccination rates have decreased by 9% from last week's rate, with an average of 46.7K doses administered per day. More than 6.3 million New Jersey residents are fully vaccinated, and more than 2 million people in the state have received third doses or boosters.

In Union County, just under 70% of the population is fully vaccinated. In Westfield, 98% of adults and 78% of our entire population is fully vaccinated. Additional breakdowns by location and age group can be found at nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_dashboard.shtml. Note that the fully vaccinated data does not include booster shot information.

With Omicron cases climbing by the day, we have the tools at our disposal to minimize the severity of its impact, which include improving our youth vaccination rate, booster shots, and mask wearing. 50% of eligible residents in Westfield have received a booster shot, and 47% of 5-11 year-olds and 73% of 12-17 year-olds have received at least one dose of vaccine.

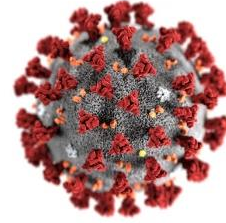
By working to increase vaccination rates in these groups, we can make a real impact to further protect our community. Our Regional Health Department will be holding two vaccination clinics on Monday, December 27 at Town Hall. From 10:00 - 12:00, primary and booster doses will be available (age 12 and up for primary doses; age 16 and up for boosters), and a pediatric clinic (ages 5-11) will take place from 2:00 - 4:00. These are walk-in clinics that do not require an appointment, with approximately 200 available doses per clinic to be administered.

I'd also like to remind everyone of additional resources available:

- New Jersey residents can now request a free COVID-19 home test kit from the New Jersey Department of Health. For more information on home testing, or to access a full list of testing sites statewide, visit <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/testing>.



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- The CDC has shared additional tips on how residents can stay safe during the holidays at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/celebrations.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/celebrations.html)
- The NJ Dept of Health has posted a quarantine calculator at [covid19.nj.gov/pages/quarantine-calculator](https://www.covid19.nj.gov/pages/quarantine-calculator).
- Union County currently operates three free vaccination sites. For details or to make an appointment, visit [ucnj.org/vax](https://www.ucnj.org/vax) online or call the COVID-19 Call Center at 908-613-7829.
- Union County operates two free COVID-19 test sites, at Kean University on Mondays and Thursdays, and at Gerald B. Green Plaza in Plainfield on Wednesdays. Due to the increased demand for tests, the holiday schedule will include an additional testing day, on December 29, at Kean University. For complete details and to make an appointment, visit [ucnj.org/covid19](https://www.ucnj.org/covid19), or call 908-613-7829.

Megan Avallone has also been in frequent contact with school superintendent Dr. Gonzalez, and they will of course continue to monitor COVID activity closely, with a shared view that it is important to keep schools open, as long as it is safe to do so. As Dr. Gonzalez communicated to district parents yesterday, there are currently no plans to transition district-wide to remote learning after the winter break.

All of this increased COVID activity comes at a time when many holiday plans will undoubtedly be impacted. Nearly two years into this pandemic, I know it's disheartening to continue to make pandemic-driven adjustments – and even cancel plans as needed – and I am very grateful for the thoughtfulness and concern of our residents as we all seek out ways to safely enjoy holiday gatherings and travel without putting others at risk. But the good news is that we are in a much better place now with vaccinations and booster shots that offer significant protection against serious illness and death.

Please heed the advice of public health officials and get vaccinated (and boosted!), test before and after gatherings and travel, and wear a mask when visiting indoor public places.

Amidst all of this uncertainty, one thing remains clear: We are fortunate to live in a community of residents who look out for each other. To those who celebrate, I wish you a very Merry Christmas filled with health, peace, and the spirit of the holiday season.