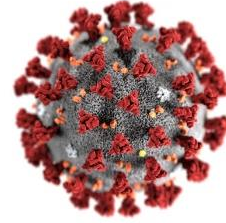




Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update December 22, 2021



I'm writing today with an update on COVID-19, as the Omicron variant continues to quickly spread throughout the state. Today, in fact, New Jersey reported another 9,711 confirmed cases, far surpassing the record for the most positive tests the state has announced on any day over the last 22 months of this pandemic. In addition, this is the seventh consecutive day with more than 6,000 new positive tests; by comparison, New Jersey had just six days total last winter with more than 6,000 cases.

New Jersey's seven-day average for new confirmed positive tests is now up 79% from a week ago and up 315% from a month ago. The CDC estimates more than 90% of current cases in the metro area are associated with omicron – up from 25% last week.

I have heard many residents echo my own observations in my personal circle of friends and family – it seems that everyone knows of several people who have recently tested positive. It's particularly disconcerting as many of us make plans for highly anticipated holiday gatherings or travel that feel long overdue. While new studies today out of the UK suggest that Omicron infections may be less severe, the findings also reiterate that it still poses a serious risk to hospitals, due to the higher transmission rate of this variant. Additionally, the potential for Omicron to cause further disruptions in the workforce and in schools is something we all want to avoid. Understandably, everyone is completely fatigued by this virus and its impact on our lives.

But there is good news. We have the tools at our disposal to fight this next surge and minimize its severity through vaccinations, booster shots, testing, gathering responsibly, and masking when necessary, especially indoors.

As a reminder, Union County currently operates three free vaccination sites. Appointments are required at each site:

- Warinanco Sports Center at Warinanco Park in Roselle, on Tuesdays and Thursdays except holidays.
- Downs Hall at Kean University in Union Township on Wednesdays and Fridays except holidays (closed on Friday, December 24 and Friday, December 31).
- Plainfield High School in Plainfield on Saturdays except holidays (closed on Saturday, December 25 and Saturday, January 1).

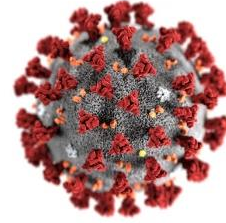
For complete details, including hours of operation and the type of vaccine available at each location, visit ucnj.org/vax online or call the COVID-19 Call Center at 908-613-7829.

Union County also operates two free COVID-19 test sites, at Kean University on Mondays and Thursdays, and at Gerald B. Green Plaza in Plainfield on Wednesdays. For complete details and to make an appointment visit ucnj.org/covid19 or call 908-613-7829.

In addition, 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 use the Department of Health's online testing site search tool, visit <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/testing>.



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Actions to stay safe during the holiday season include:

- Wearing a well fitted mask that covers your nose and mouth anytime you are indoors in a public place
- Keeping a six-foot distance from others who do not live in your home
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated public spaces
- Test to prevent spread to others
- Practice frequent hand hygiene

Tomorrow, I will share updated data on Westfield's case numbers over the last week, which will give us a better picture of the local impact of this variant. In the meantime, let's all make every effort to make this holiday season as safe as possible for our community.