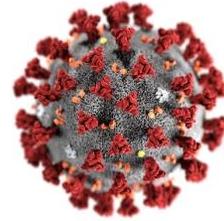




Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update January 7, 2022



As you can see in this week's COVID information, case numbers and hospitalizations continue to climb due to the Omicron variant. And while these numbers are sobering and should indeed be taken very seriously, their context is also important. We are not in the same place as 2020 or last year. Health officials are reporting that many of those who are hospitalized with Omicron recover more quickly, and are less likely to need intensive care or a ventilator. This is encouraging news as experts report we are likely to reach the peak of this variant in the coming weeks. In the interim, the impact of staff shortages in hospitals, schools, and throughout the workforce continues to present ongoing challenges that we can all help mitigate.

Here in Town Hall, we currently have 18 employees out of the office across multiple departments due to testing positive or quarantining from direct exposure, down from 23 last week. We are thankful that all of these positive cases among our staff are mild in nature.

I know the ongoing COVID data can be numbing as we see this current surge continue to climb. However, it bears repeating that we have the tools at our disposal to help us minimize restrictions to keeping our routines and normalcy intact – namely, vaccinations, boosters, and masking in indoor public places. I am proud to live in a highly vaccinated community that has demonstrated its commitment to public health and to one another's well being. Let's continue to show up for each other and take the basic steps needed to keep our schools and businesses safe.

According to the New Jersey Department of Health, the entire state is now showing very high levels of COVID activity, and the CDC reports that 85% of new COVID-19 cases are identified as the Omicron variant.

But there is good news as well. Earlier this week, the CDC authorized booster shots for ages 12-15 and a third dose of vaccine to individuals ages 5-11 who are immunocompromised. In addition, the recommended interval between second doses (of Moderna and Pfizer) and the booster has been shortened from six months to five months.

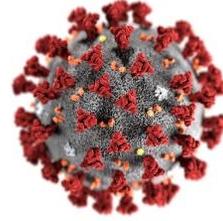
For the month of December, there were 1,107 cases identified in Westfield (up from 194 in November), 425 of which were in those age 19 and younger. In the first week of January, there were 213 cases reported to date, 85 of which have been in individuals 19 and younger.

During December, there were nine COVID hospitalizations reported among Westfield residents and, sadly, one death – a 79 year-old unvaccinated individual.

Statewide, vaccination rates have decreased by 10% from last week's rate, with an average of 33.7K doses administered per day. More than 6.4 million New Jersey residents are fully vaccinated (75% of the eligible population), and 2.3 million (46% of the eligible population) have received third doses or boosters. In a briefing this week, Governor Murphy indicated that the unvaccinated are accounting for roughly 70% of those being hospitalized in New Jersey.



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In Union County, just over 70% of the population is fully vaccinated. In Westfield, 99% of adults and 78% of our entire population is fully vaccinated. In addition, 53% of children ages 5-11 in Westfield have received at least one dose of vaccine, and 59% of eligible residents have received a booster dose. Additional breakdowns by location and age group can be found on the [NJ COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

The Health Department's immunization outreach continues with all three brands of vaccine, with numerous clinics held during December. In total, they administered 2,135 COVID vaccinations during the month (up from 809 individuals vaccinated during November). They are offering vaccinations in home and in the office for those 12 and above, and any resident interested in receiving the vaccine can call 908-789-4070. This afternoon, they held a clinic in Town Hall for those age 12 and above, and will continue to offer clinics, walk-in appointments, and home visits throughout the winter – in addition to free flu vaccinations for any adult 18 or older. All residents over the age of 12 who are five months past their last dose of Pfizer or Moderna, or two months past their dose of J&J, are highly encouraged to get a booster dose, as recommended by the CDC.

The full Mayor's update is available [here](#).