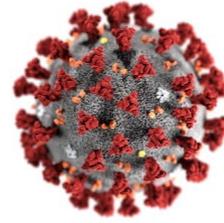




Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update January 15, 2021



The Department of Health reports 133 new cases of COVID-19 in Westfield from January 8 - 14. Of these cases:

- 39 remain under investigation
- 29 had a positive household contact
- 17 were unable to be reached
- 22 had no known exposure
- 12 had known exposure
- 4 were associated with hockey
- 3 were associated with travel
- 2 were exposed at New Year's Eve parties
- 2 were exposed at work
- 2 were hospitalized (ages 53 & 74)
- 1 was associated with indoor sports (non-hockey)

The ages of these cases ranged from 1 to 77, broken down as follows:

- Age 9 and under: 13 cases
- Age 10-19: 33 cases
- Age 20-29: 16 cases
- Age 30-39: 16 cases
- Age 40-49: 21 cases
- Age 50-59: 20 cases
- Age 60-69: 11 cases
- Age 70-79: 4 cases
- Age 80-89: No cases
- Age 90 and above: No cases

Sadly, we have two new fatalities, both of which were cases reported earlier this month -- a 92 year-old male associated with a long-term care facility, and another 92 year-old male who was hospitalized.

The state's seven-day average for new confirmed cases is up 15% from a week ago and 18% from a month ago. The statewide rate of COVID-19 transmission is currently 1.11; a transmission rate over 1 indicates the outbreak is expanding. On Wednesday, New Jersey reached a daily record number of 6,922 new cases, and the NJ Department of Health indicated that the state is preparing for a surge in hospitalizations, resulting from the latest spike in cases, that could come as soon as next week. In addition, the CDC is anticipating that 90,000 Americans will die within the next three weeks, and in New Jersey, one out of every 500 people has died from COVID-19. It is anticipated that COVID will be the leading cause of death both in New Jersey and nationally for 2020.

Regional Health Officer Megan Avallone reports that Westfield, like the rest of New Jersey, is showing a high level of activity once again. As indicated in the data, the most highly impacted age group is between 10 and 19, representing 25% of the week's cases. At the high school, both the boys and girls hockey teams have had recent outbreaks. Westfield's total number of cases to date is 1,393.

In terms of vaccinations, as of Friday, more than 310,000 doses have been administered in New Jersey -- 273,335 of which were the first dose, and 35,512 were the second. So far, more than 1.5 million people statewide have registered to get their vaccines, which are being administered at more than 130 locations.

That being said, I know it's incredibly frustrating, especially for the vulnerable members of our community, to find that vaccination appointments are scarce, and our Health Department is being inundated with questions about how residents should proceed. Currently, the State allows anyone to pre-register at covid19.nj.gov/vaccine, and their system will notify you when you are eligible to receive a vaccine. At that point, you must make an appointment at a vaccination site based on availability.

The Union County site at Kean University is currently administering 300 vaccinations per day, and has activated their online portal at ucnjvaccine.org, although all appointments are currently filled. Their system, once it opens again, will only accept reservations for those who are eligible to receive the vaccination at this time. Those who are ineligible to receive vaccinations will not be able to request an appointment.

Eligible residents/employees include the following:

- Healthcare Personnel, Long-Term Care Residents and Staff
- Uniformed Law Enforcement and Fire Service personnel
- Individuals ages 65+
- Individuals ages 16-64 with medical conditions that render them at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19: cancer, chronic kidney disease, COPD, Down Syndrome, heart conditions (i.e. heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies), immunocompromised state from solid organ transplant, obesity and severe obesity (BMI of ≥ 30), pregnancy, sickle cell disease, smoking, and Type 2 diabetes

Currently, there is no interconnectivity between the County of Union and State of New Jersey's vaccination registration portals. This is a known issue that the State continues to work on.

The good news in all of this is that there is a clear demand for vaccinations, and I'm pleased to hear from many residents who are staying informed and planning to be vaccinated in order to protect themselves and the community. It is everyone's hope that appointment availability will continue to increase over time as more vaccines are delivered and vaccination site locations expand. We will likely see more changes to assist with additional planning and resources on a federal level after next week to accelerate the monumental task of this rollout.

There is a light at the end of this tunnel. It's not imminent, but the increased pace of vaccinations offer us all much-needed hope and a gradual path back to normalcy. That being said, let's not forget the utterly tragic number of lives lost over these past ten months -- not only globally and nationally, but also here at home. Please join us on Tuesday for a nationwide moment of remembrance as we honor those who died from COVID-19. We will be live streaming our brief ceremony at 5:10PM on the Town's Facebook page, which will be followed by the church bells ringing in Town in honor of the lives lost. We ask everyone in the community to place a light or candle in their window at 5:30 to join together in remembering those who died, and to pray for the continued health of our community.

We have come so far, but we must see the last few months of this through responsibly. Thank you, as always, for caring for one another. Have a wonderful weekend.