



## Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update January 22, 2021



The Department of Health reports 126 new cases of COVID-19 in Westfield from January 15-21. Exposure information from disease investigation and contact tracing interviews is not as readily available as it has been in previous weeks, as our Regional Health Department's resources have been focused predominantly on vaccination inquiries and ongoing efforts to expand vaccine distribution. The ages of this week's cases ranged from 11 months to 94 years old, broken down as follows:

- Age 9 and under: 7 cases
- Age 10-19: 29 cases
- Age 20-29: 12 cases
- Age 30-39: 8 cases
- Age 40-49: 24 cases
- Age 50-59: 24 cases
- Age 60-69: 9 cases
- Age 70-79: 5 cases
- Age 80-89: 4 cases
- Age 90 and above: 3 cases
- Age unconfirmed: 1 case

The State's seven-day average for new confirmed cases is down 24% from a week ago and down 6% from a month ago, and statewide hospitalizations as of Thursday night were at the lowest level since December 5. The positivity rate for tests conducted on Monday, the most recent day available, was 10.1%, and the statewide rate of transmission dropped slightly to 1.04, from 1.07 the day before. The State also confirmed the first two cases of the highly-contagious COVID-19 variant first identified in the U.K. New Jersey joins at least 20 states where the strain has been confirmed.

Regional Health Officer Megan Avallone reports that Westfield, like the rest of New Jersey, is showing a high level of activity once again. The most highly impacted age group remains between 10 and 19 this week, representing 23% of the newly reported cases.

In terms of vaccinations, as of Friday, more than 500,000 doses have been administered in New Jersey -- 418,711 of which were the first dose. So far, more than 1.9 million people statewide have registered to get their vaccines. State health officials stated that although New Jersey has the capacity to administer 470,000 doses weekly, the State has been receiving 100,000 doses per week from the federal government. As of today, all six vaccine mega-sites are operational, in addition to over 130 county-run and community-based sites. Our Regional Health Department continues to explore any and all possibilities to help provide more access for our residents, while also providing assistance at the mega-sites.

Vaccine eligibility remains the same as last week, with the following criteria in place:

- 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  $\geq 30$ ), pregnancy, sickle cell disease, smoking, and Type 2 diabetes

This vaccine supply shortage is incredibly frustrating for everyone looking to be vaccinated after a very long year of taking the appropriate public health precautions, and I share the concern for those in our vulnerable population that have difficulty securing an appointment. However, I remain hopeful that this massive undertaking will continue to improve in the coming weeks at the federal level if we can all please stay patient. As the winter season continues, please don't lose sight of the importance of ongoing mask wearing, social distancing, and avoiding indoor gatherings so that we are all doing our part to minimize additional spread of the virus as more of the population gets vaccinated.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who joined us virtually on Tuesday for our COVID-19 remembrance ceremony to honor those we lost and provide comfort to their loved ones. The personalized details we received from the family members of those who died were painful reminders of the toll this virus has taken on communities around the world. I am grateful to everyone who participated to make sure we all continue to hold these families in our hearts.