

COVID-19 and Mental Health

During the pandemic, many continue to experience feelings of uncertainty, along with deep concerns for their own well-being and that of our loved ones, the economy and society at large. This has drastically increased stress levels on most everyone. Maintaining one's mental health is an essential part of achieving overall well-being. The link below provides resources that will be helpful in connecting individuals with people who can benefit from talking about how they are feeling. There is also information about the virtual support groups and hotlines that are available through various organizations. <https://www.nj211.org/covid-19-and-mental-health>

COVID-19 Activity

Nationally, there is a rise in new infections in the first two weeks of November, as is the case in New Jersey, but the numbers of new COVID infections, hospitalizations and deaths still remain lower than in previous peaks. The State's seven-day average for confirmed positive tests is up about 28% from a week ago and 11% from a month ago. The rate of transmission in NJ increased to 1.15. Any transmission rate above 1.0 is concerning and indicates that each infected person is passing the virus to at least one other person. The higher the number, the greater the risk of viral spread throughout the community. **For the week ending November 13, 2021, five (5) of the six (6) regions of the State, including our Northwest and Northeast Regions, are classified as MODERATE (yellow) COVID Activity. Only the Central East Region remains classified as HIGH (orange) COVID Activity.**

For the latest Statewide and Regional COVID Activity Report that specifies the Risk Levels by Region (usually updated by the State each Thursday), please click the following link:

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>

The rate of new COVID infections in all of the municipalities within the Pequannock Health Department's jurisdiction are gradually rising in most instances, over the last two weeks or so. While it is too early to characterize it as a sustained trend, the fear is that this could be the beginning of a winter surge in cases.

The spread of COVID is largely driven by a combination of the following factors:

- Many within the population who remain **unvaccinated**
- COVID outbreaks involving highly contagious Delta variant, which now accounts for over 99% of all sequenced COVID infections.
- Breakthrough Infections among the vaccinated (the vaccines are safe and highly effective against infection from variants, including the highly contagious Delta Variant. They are especially effective in **protecting against hospitalizations and deaths**)
- Lifted or relaxed restrictions and diminished practice of protective precautions
- More indoor congregating in less ventilated spaces resulting from seasonably cooler weather.

Please note, the daily cumulative numbers of infected individuals displayed by municipality in the Morris County link below are subject to fluctuate. At times, a percentage of cases are assigned to the wrong municipalities. Also, labs sometimes mistakenly enter the healthcare provider's address rather than the patients' addresses, which may skew the numbers to some extent. Corrections are made over time, as inaccuracies are discovered. However, it should be emphasized that the trends illustrated by the data are generally accurate.

Please see the **links below for the NJDOH COVID Activity Dashboard, the NJ Regional COVID Activity Reports and the links to the Morris and Passaic County Health Department COVID Websites.** Morris County links include daily updates of cumulative numbers of cases by municipality and the COVID Activity and Risk Level in each of the State's six regions.

NJDOH Dashboard:

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_dashboard.shtml

Statewide and Regional COVID Activity Report and Risk Level by Region:

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>

Morris County-Based COVID Information including Data for Total Positive Cases by Municipality and COVID Testing Availability:

<https://health.morriscountynj.gov/coronavirus/>

Updated COVID-19 Vaccination Information

- **For those who are Unvaccinated, Getting Vaccinated will Give a High Level of Protection to your Family, Friends and Community. An Abundance of Appointments are Available, It's Quick and Easy!**

For those who have yet to get vaccinated, serious consideration should be given to get vaccinated as soon as possible. The vaccine is **HIGHLY EFFECTIVE** in protecting against infection and even more so from severe illness, hospitalization, and death. This includes protection against the Delta and other COVID Variants that have emerged. The impact of the pandemic on every sector of our society has been devastating. These impacts have included increased rates of suicide, drug addiction, alcoholism, depression, emotional and psychological distress, among other negative economic and societal impacts. **The quicker this pandemic is eradicated, the quicker our nation will heal and grow. The greatest way to do this, is through vaccination.**

Fully vaccinated still means two-doses of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one dose of J and J vaccine and a booster is not required to be considered fully vaccinated. It will take at least a two-week period after the first shot of J and J or the second shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine to provide the maximum level of immunity. Whether or not you are vaccinated, it's important to follow CDC prevention guidelines that are available for **vaccinated** and **unvaccinated** people.

While vaccinated individuals have a reduced likelihood of becoming infected, infection is still possible. For those vaccinated individuals who are infected, they may have the potential of spreading infection to others because of the high viral load associated with the Delta variant. Asymptomatic infection or mild to moderate symptomatic disease may develop in a vaccinated, infected person. Severe disease, hospitalization, and death among the vaccinated is rare.

All three vaccines authorized in the United States are available to everyone 18 and older. Vaccine is now authorized and available for 5 to 11 year olds in addition to 12 to 17 year olds. Those 5 to 17 years old are only authorized to receive an age-appropriate dose of [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#).

- **There are Multiple Ways to Get Vaccinated. Appointment Based or Walk-up clinics are Now Easily Accessible**
 - For up-to-date vaccine locations in New Jersey, please visit covid19.nj.gov/finder.
- **Chain Pharmacies, Healthcare Systems and Other Outlets have Enough Vaccine to Meet the Demand. Vaccine Supply is Plentiful and Appointments are Easy to Get. Please Get Vaccinated!**

- Many Healthcare Systems and Chain pharmacies, such as CVS, Walgreens, Rite Aid, Walmart are now welcoming **walk-ins**. Appointments are still recommended.

➤ **Atlantic Health System Vaccination Centers**

- Atlantic Health System Vaccination Centers may continue to be open for limited hours in Clark, Hackettstown, Morristown, Mountain Lakes, Newton and Pompton Plains.
- Go to the following link to make an appointment: atlantichealth.org/covidvaccine . Additional COVID-19 information and vaccine updates from Atlantic Health System are also available on their webpage.

For more information on the progress of New Jersey's vaccination program, please follow these links:

<https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/vaccine> and for the NJDOH COVID Dashboard:

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_dashboard.shtml

➤ **Booster Shots for All Three Vaccines that are Approved for Use in the U.S. are Now Available to Those who are Eligible**

The CDC has recommended boosters for all three vaccines be made available and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has amended the emergency use authorization (EUA) for the **Pfizer-BioNTech** mRNA COVID-19 Vaccine **and** the **Moderna** mRNA vaccine, to be administered as a single booster dose **at least six months** after completion of the primary series. The authorization also applies to the **J&J Janssen vaccine**, to be administered as a single booster dose **at least two months** after the primary shot.

Those who are **eligible** include the following:

- individuals 65 years of age and older;
- individuals 18 through 64 years of age at high risk of severe COVID-19; and
- individuals 18 through 64 years of age whose frequent institutional (such as long term care and congregate facilities) or occupational (such as healthcare and first responders) exposure to SARS-CoV-2 puts them at high risk of serious complications of COVID-19, including severe COVID-19.

Individuals may choose any of the vaccines to serve as their booster, as mixing and matching is considered acceptable. For more information from the CDC about the COVID boosters, please click on the following link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/p1021-covid-booster.html>

➤ **CDC Recommends a Third Dose of COVID-19 mRNA Vaccines for those who are Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised**

CDC has recommended that people whose immune systems are moderately to severely compromised should receive an additional dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) at least 28 days after the second dose of [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#) or [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#) or an additional dose of **J&J Janssen vaccine** at least two months after the primary dose.

This includes people who have:

- Been receiving active cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood
- Received an organ transplant and are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Received a stem cell transplant within the last 2 years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)

- Advanced or untreated HIV infection
- Active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may suppress your immune response

People should consult with their healthcare provider about their medical condition, and whether getting an additional dose is appropriate for them. As with the mRNA two-dose series and the single dose of J&J Janssen, [serious side effects are rare](#), but may occur.

The Delta Variant and its Sub-variants and their Impacts on Vaccine Efficacy

The Delta COVID Variant and its sub-variants, now accounts for over 98% of lab sequenced COVID infections in the United States. It is nearly twice as contagious as the UK variant, which is approximately 40% more contagious than the original COVID strain. The viral load of an infected person can be up to 1,000 times greater than the original strain and many of the other variants. Increased cases across the United States correlate directly to the highly contagious Delta variants/sub-variants.

The most important thing you can do to protect yourself from the Delta variant is to **get fully vaccinated**. Studies indicate that the Delta variant may be more dangerous than previous strains, most especially for those who are unvaccinated. It is important to emphasize that the **vaccine does provide a high level of protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death.**

COVID-19 Testing

➤ Morris County

For more information, please see the Morris County website at <https://www.morriscountynj.gov/Residents/Health/Coronavirus/Get-a-Covid-19-Test>

Quarantine Protocols for Those Who've been Exposed to Someone Who Tested COVID Positive

1. For close contacts of an individual confirmed positive, a **14-day quarantine is preferred** for all individuals and groups, where feasible. It is the safest standard.

*When Regions of the State are at the **MODERATE (yellow) COVID Activity** classification or the **LOW (green) COVID Activity** Classification, institutions and organizations may choose to adopt the abbreviated quarantine time frames set forth by the CDC and NJDOH, of **7 days quarantine from last date of exposure with a negative test taken between days 5 and 7, or without testing, 10 days quarantine from last date of exposure.**

2. Persons not needing to quarantine:

A. COVID-19 positive (lab-confirmed viral test) within 3 months: Persons who tested positive for COVID-19 (lab-confirmed viral test), clinically recovered from COVID-19 and then have close contact with someone with COVID-19 within 3 months does not need to be quarantined or retested. However, persons who have close contact with someone with COVID-19 more than 3 months after the initial infection should quarantine.

B. Fully Vaccinated Persons: Vaccinated persons should continue to follow current guidance to protect themselves and others, including covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands often, following CDC travel guidance, and following any applicable workplace or school guidance, including guidance related to personal protective equipment use and SARS-CoV-2 testing. However, fully vaccinated persons who have close contact with someone with COVID-19 do NOT need to quarantine if they meet all of the following criteria:

- 1.) Are fully vaccinated (i.e., ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine), **AND**
- 2.) Have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure.

Persons who **do not** meet the above criteria should continue to follow current quarantine guidance after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Fully vaccinated persons who do not quarantine should still watch for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following an exposure. If they experience symptoms, they should be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, including SARS-CoV-2 testing, if indicated.

Those who have been determined to be a [close contact](#) to a COVID -19 positive individual **and who are fully vaccinated** should get tested 3-5 days after exposure, even if not symptomatic. Masks should also be worn indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until test result is negative. Those with a positive result should isolate for 10 days.

Definition of Close Contact to a COVID Positive Individual

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) has established criteria for what constitutes a “Close Contact” to someone who is a COVID-19 positive individual. It is defined as – **“a total of 15 minutes or more of close contact exposure (6 feet or closer) to an infected person during a 24-hour period”**. Those who have been determined to be a close contact to a COVID -19 positive individual must quarantine for a period of not less than **14 days**. However, when Regions of the State are at the **MODERATE (yellow) COVID Activity** classification or the **LOW (green) COVID Activity** Classification, institutions and organizations may choose to adopt the abbreviated quarantine time frames set forth by the CDC and NJDOH, of a **7 day quarantine from last date of exposure with a negative test taken between days 5 and 7, or without testing, a 10 day quarantine from last date of exposure.**

In classroom settings in **K through 12 schools**, criteria for what constitutes a “Close Contact” is “a total of 15 minutes or more of close contact exposure (3 feet or closer) to an infected person during a 24-hour period”. **Please see the attached guidance document from the CDC “Steps for Determining Close Contact Quarantine K-12”.**

Those who have been determined to be a [close contact](#) to a COVID -19 positive individual **and who are fully vaccinated** should monitor for symptoms for 14 days. Masks should also be worn indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until test result is negative. Should symptoms develop or for those who test positive, a 10 day **isolation** from the date of last exposure, should be completed.

Contact Tracing and Disease Investigation

The NJ Department of Health (NJDOH) has provided additional contact tracers to our local Health Department from the State work force. They support the operation while under the direction of the Pequannock Health Department’s nurse supervisors.

School and University Operations While Addressing COVID Outbreaks

The Pequannock Health Department is working closely with these institutions to contact trace, investigate, isolate, and quarantine individuals to quickly contain any spread of the COVID-19 virus that may be identified within these institutions. Many institutions of higher learning are requiring students to be fully COVID Vaccinated in order to be permitted on campus. Pfizer has received an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the FDA to allow vaccinations of those who are 12 years of age and up. Those under 12 may also become eligible soon. Other vaccines are undergoing clinical trials for those under 18 and may soon also receive an

EUA from the FDA. State vaccination mandates for students under 18 years of age are **not** expected, at this time.

Attendance at Gatherings

There are no longer any numerical limits for indoor or outdoor gatherings.

If you are fully vaccinated, you can participate in many of the activities that you did before the pandemic.

Fully vaccinated individuals:

- Do not need to quarantine after having close contact with someone with COVID-19, as long as they remain asymptomatic – exceptions exist for individuals living in high-risk congregate settings that can be found in [NJ DOH's recommended minimum quarantine time frames](#)
- Do not need to quarantine or get tested before/after domestic travel unless otherwise required by their destination
- Do not need to wear masks at small private gatherings, such as at their homes with family and friends
- Do not need to wear masks outdoors

Unvaccinated Individuals:

- [Wear a mask](#), wash your hands, practice social distancing, and stay home if you are sick.
- Indoor gatherings are particularly dangerous places for the virus to spread. Host outdoor activities rather than indoor activities as much as possible.
- If you do host indoors, increase ventilation by opening windows and doors or by placing central air and heating on continuous circulation.
- The smaller the gathering is, the less likely it is that someone is infected and put loved ones at risk.
- Require guests to wear masks when not eating, whether indoors or outdoors.
- Plan ahead and ask guests to avoid contact with people outside of their households for 14 days before the gathering.
- Delay travel until you are fully vaccinated based on CDC guidance. For more information, refer to the [CDC's guidance for domestic travel](#).
- Guests should avoid direct contact, including handshakes and hugs, with others outside their household.
- Make hand sanitizer available for guests.
- Gatherings that last longer pose more risk than shorter gatherings.
- Remind guests to wash their hands before serving or eating food.
- Use single-use hand towels or paper towels for drying hands so guests do not share a towel.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and any shared items between use when feasible.
- Consider keeping a list of guests who attended for potential future contact tracing needs. If you are called by a contact tracer, it's critical that you answer the call to protect us all. Your help is the key to stopping the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives.

Data suggests the Delta variant is more transmissible even among vaccinated individuals, comparatively speaking. **Face masks** are strongly recommended for both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals in indoor settings where there is an increased risk, especially when the region of the State is classified to have a **substantial or high COVID risk**. This includes:

- Crowded indoor settings
- Indoor settings involving activities with close contact with others who may not be fully vaccinated
- Indoor settings where the vaccine status of other individuals in the setting is unknown
- Where an individual is immunocompromised or at increased risk for severe disease

As no vaccine is 100% effective, people must balance preventive actions to reduce possible transmission and maintain safety. People who have a weakened immune system should discuss whether they should continue precautions with their healthcare provider. The combination of COVID-19 vaccination and [continued precautions to protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.

Travel

While the NJDOH has lifted its travel advisory for travel, the CDC travel guidelines are still recommended for domestic and international travel.

Travelers and residents returning from any U.S. state or territory beyond the immediate region (New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware) should follow the [recommendations from the CDC](#).

It is **strongly recommended** that international travelers and residents who have returned to the U.S. from foreign countries follow the [recommendations from the CDC](#).

For more CDC/NJDOH Travel Advisory Information please follow the links below:

NJDOH

<https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/travel-and-transportation/are-there-travel-restrictions-to-or-from-new-jersey>

CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>

Health & Safety Recommendations For Businesses and Workplaces

Last Updated: 09/21/2021

The NJ Department of Health has issued industry-specific health and safety recommendations for:

- [Amusement Parks, Arcades, and Playgrounds](#)
- [Bars and Restaurants](#)
- [Gyms](#)
- [Personal Care Services](#)
- [Pools and Aquatic Facilities](#)

General public health and safety recommendations that businesses and workplaces might consider to better protect employees and customers:

- Businesses are encouraged to follow [CDC safety guidelines and social distancing](#) to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- Masks are not required for most indoor workplaces, however businesses should encourage unvaccinated employees, customers, and guests to wear masks.
- If masks or gloves are required by employers, businesses are encouraged to provide them to employees
- Businesses are encouraged to provide approved sanitization materials for employees and visitors at no cost to those individuals
- Employees should practice hand hygiene and employers should provide employees with sufficient break time for that purpose
- Routine cleaning and disinfection of all high-touch areas is encouraged in accordance with DOH and [CDC guidelines](#)

- Conduct daily health checks, such as temperature screenings, visual symptom checking, self-assessment checklists, and/or health questionnaires, consistent with CDC guidance, prior to each shift
- Employers are encouraged to keep sick employees from entering the workplace and follow requirements of applicable leave laws
- Encourage sick employees to stay home
- Employers should promptly notify employees of any known exposure to COVID-19 at the worksite

Businesses have the right to require stricter mask policies, but businesses are not allowed to restrict the use of face masks by their staff, customers, or visitors. Municipalities and counties are also permitted to impose stricter requirements on masking in businesses open to the public.

Social distancing, masking, and other safety measures are still required in high-risk areas such as [healthcare settings](#), [public transportation](#), [child care centers](#), [correctional facilities](#), and homeless shelters.

For more safety tips, refer to the [CDC's COVID-19 Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#).

Executive Orders

The vast majority of executive orders issued by Governor Murphy in accordance with the public health emergency have expired in July. Those that remain in effect that are most directly related to public health disease control measures, are as follows:

Executive Order 271-Governor Murphy Directs Vaccination or Testing Requirements for All State Contract Employees

All State contract employees must maintain a policy that requires all covered workers to either provide adequate proof to the covered setting that they have been fully vaccinated or submit to COVID-19 testing at minimum one to two times weekly. This order is effective immediately.

Executive Order 264-Governor Murphy Directs Vaccination or Testing Requirements for All Childcare Center Personnel

All Childcare Centers must maintain a policy that requires all covered workers to either provide adequate proof to the covered setting that they have been fully vaccinated or submit to COVID-19 testing at minimum one to two times weekly. This requirement shall take effect on November 1, 2021, at which time any covered workers that have not provided adequate proof that they are fully vaccinated must submit to a minimum of weekly or twice weekly testing on an ongoing basis until fully vaccinated.

Executive Order 253-Governor Murphy Directs Vaccination or Testing Requirements for All Preschool to Grade 12 Personnel and for All State Workers

All State workers and All public, private, and parochial preschool programs, and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools (“covered settings”), must maintain a policy that requires all covered workers to either provide adequate proof to the covered setting that they have been fully vaccinated or submit to COVID-19 testing at minimum one to two times weekly. This requirement shall take effect on October 18, 2021 at which time any covered workers that have not provided adequate proof that they are fully vaccinated must submit to a minimum of weekly or twice weekly testing on an ongoing basis until fully vaccinated.

Executive Order 252-Governor Murphy Directs Vaccination Requirements in Health Care Facilities and High-Risk Congregate Settings

Covered health care and high-risk congregate settings must maintain a policy that requires covered workers to either provide adequate proof that they have been fully vaccinated or submit to COVID-19 testing at minimum one to two times weekly. This requirement shall take effect on September 7, 2021, at which time any covered workers that have not provided adequate proof that they are fully vaccinated must submit to weekly or twice weekly testing on an ongoing basis until fully vaccinated.

Executive Order 251-Governor Murphy Announces Mask Requirements for the beginning of the 2021/2022 School Year

All public, private, and parochial preschool programs and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools (collectively “school districts”), must maintain a policy regarding mandatory use of face masks by staff, students, and visitors in the indoor portion of the school district premises, except in certain circumstances, as specified in the Order.

Executive Order 242- Governor Murphy Lifts Major COVID Restrictions

Effective Friday, May 28, 2021, individuals in indoor public spaces are not required to wear masks, regardless of their ability to maintain six feet of distance from other individuals or groups. In accordance with CDC recommendations, individuals who are not fully vaccinated should continue to wear masks in indoor public spaces. Employers and entities overseeing public spaces in settings where masking is no longer required pursuant to the provisions of the Paragraph are permitted to impose stricter requirements regarding mask-wearing in indoor settings for employees, customers, guests, and other individuals, where otherwise consistent with federal and State law. Employers and entities overseeing public spaces shall not restrict individuals from wearing masks in those settings and shall not in any way penalize or retaliate against individuals who elect to wear a mask. “Indoor public spaces”, as it pertains to this order, do not include child care centers, other child care facilities, youth summer camps, and public, private, and parochial preschool program premises and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools.

*Please note, Executive Orders may be issued by the Governor at any time to establish or relax restrictions on certain businesses, social activities and gatherings. For up to date and more complete information, **please refer to the entire contents of the Executive Orders and Executive Directives listed at the links below.***

Please see the link below for all Executive Orders to date:

https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html

Please see the link below for an up to date list of Executive Directives of the NJDOH:

<https://www.state.nj.us/health/legal/covid19/>