

## COVID-19 Activity

Nationally, the number of new infections is slowly increasing. In New Jersey, the numbers of new COVID infections, hospitalizations and deaths remain much lower than in previous peaks, but are slowly increasing.

The rate of transmission in NJ is now fluctuating between 1.05 and 1.40. Anything above 1.00 is considered concerning. The higher the number, the greater the risk of viral spread throughout the community. **As of September 24, 2021, three of the six (6) regions of the State, including the Northwest Region, are classified as MODERATE (yellow) COVID Activity. The remaining three (3) regions have been elevated to HIGH (orange) COVID Activity. For the latest Statewide and Regional COVID Activity Reports and Risk Levels by Region, which are usually published 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 had increased sharply from the very low level of spread that was experienced in June and early July. It has now mostly leveled off at this currently elevated rate for the last few weeks.

The spread of COVID is now 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 98% of all COVID infections that have been sequenced.
- Breakthrough Infections among the Vaccinated (**the vaccine appears to be highly effective against most variants, including the highly contagious Delta Variant**, but especially for protecting against hospitalizations and deaths)
- Lifted or relaxed restrictions and diminished practice of protective precautions

**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](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/>

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

The Delta COVID Variant and its sub-variants, now accounts for roughly 98% of new 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 variant.

The most important thing you can do to protect yourself from the Delta variant is to **get fully vaccinated**. Fully vaccinated means two-doses of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one dose of J and J vaccine. 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 who are vaccinated, if they do become infected, they 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 also develop in a vaccinated, infected person. While not conclusive, 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.** Ongoing studies indicate that it is likely vaccination booster shots will be necessary to maintain a high level of sustained protection. The pharmaceutical industry continues to prepare for this eventuality, should a definitive decision be made to recommend booster shots more broadly.

Vaccines are highly effective against severe illness, but the [Delta variant causes more infections and spreads faster](#) than earlier forms of the virus that causes COVID-19. [Learn more about variants in the US.](#)

## **Updated COVID-19 Vaccination Information**

### **Countering the Waning Immunity of the Vaccine**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration amended the emergency use authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine to allow for use of a single booster dose, to be administered at least six months after completion of the primary series in:

- 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 or occupational exposure to SARS-CoV-2 puts them at high risk of serious complications of COVID-19 including severe COVID-19.

The authorization applies only to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. Vaccination outlets will be authorized very shortly to begin administering the third shot booster to those who are newly eligible.

### **CDC recommends an additional dose of COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine for Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised People (See the attached Flyer)**

CDC now recommends that people whose immune systems are compromised moderately to severely 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](#).

#### **➤ Additional Vaccine Dose for Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised People - What You Need to Know**

- People who are moderately to severely immunocompromised make up about 3% of the adult population and are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 because they are more at risk of serious, prolonged illness.
- People who have compromised immune systems may benefit from an additional dose to make sure they have enough protection against COVID-19.
- CDC recommends people who are moderately to severely immunocompromised should receive an additional dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) at least 28 days after the initial 2 doses.
- There is not enough data at this time to determine whether immunocompromised people who received the Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine also have an improved antibody response following an additional dose of the same vaccine.
- Fully vaccinated immunocompromised people have accounted for a larger proportion of hospitalized "[breakthrough cases](#)," and that suggests immunocompromised people are more likely to transmit the virus to household contacts.

#### **➤ Who Needs an Additional dose of COVID-19 Vaccine?**

CDC is recommending that moderately to severely immunocompromised people receive an additional 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 talk to their healthcare provider about their medical condition, and whether getting an additional dose is appropriate for them.

➤ **Can you mix and match the vaccines?**

For people who received either Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine series, a third dose of the same mRNA vaccine should be used. A person should not receive more than three mRNA vaccine doses. If the mRNA vaccine product given for the first two doses is not available or is unknown, either mRNA COVID-19 vaccine product may be administered.

➤ **What should immunocompromised people who received the J&J/Janssen vaccine do?**

The FDA's recent EUA amendment for the immunocompromised as they are defined, only applies to mRNA COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna), as does CDC's recommendation.

Emerging data have demonstrated that immunocompromised people who have low or no protection following two doses of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines may have an improved response after an additional dose of the same vaccine. There is not enough data at this time to determine whether immunocompromised people who received the Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine also have an improved antibody response following an additional dose of the same vaccine.

➤ **What are the risks of vaccinating individuals with an additional dose?**

There is limited information about the risks of receiving an additional dose of vaccine, and the safety, efficacy, and benefit of additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine in immunocompromised people continues to be evaluated. So far, reactions reported after the third mRNA dose were similar to that of the two-dose series: fatigue and pain at injection site were the most commonly reported side effects, and overall, most symptoms were mild to moderate.

However, as with the two-dose series, [serious side effects are rare](#), but may occur.

**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! (Please See the Attached Fact Sheet Flyers about the Safety and effectiveness of the Vaccine)**

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. While the COVID pandemic remains with us, and as rising numbers of infection emerge through the population, the return to a normal, fully open, and healthy society could be threatened. The impact of this would continue to prolong the dire threats to public health that have been observed over the last year. These impacts have included increased rates of suicide, drug addiction, alcoholism, depression, emotional and psychological distress, among other negative impacts. **The quicker this pandemic is eradicated, the quicker our nation will heal and grow. The greatest way to do this, is through vaccination.**

Final FDA approval for the Pfizer vaccine has been issued. The Moderna vaccine is also expected to receive final FDA approval at some point in the next few weeks.

Roughly 50% of Americans have now been fully vaccinated, but the demand for the vaccine has waned. This is concerning, as we are still not quite where we should be to insulate ourselves from the potential of higher infection rates and the COVID variants that are emerging. Cases are now increasing because of the highly contagious Delta variant and interest in the vaccine has begun to increase, slightly.

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

Vaccines are available to everyone 18 and older. Those who are 12 to 17 years of age are also eligible, but only with Pfizer vaccine, at this time.

### **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](https://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, Hackettsown, Morristown, Mountain Lakes, Newton and Pompton Plains.
  - Go to the following link to make an appointment, or sign up for alerts: [atlanticealth.org/covidvaccine](https://atlanticealth.org/covidvaccine) . Additional COVID-19 information and vaccine updates from Atlantic Health System are also available on this webpage.

### **COVID-19 Testing**

#### ➤ Morris County

For more information, please see the Morris County website at <https://health.morriscountynj.gov/coronavirus/>.

### **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.  
There are certain narrow circumstances of economic or other hardships that might allow for quarantine periods to be reduced to 7 or 10 days as set forth in the applicable CDC/NJDOH Guidance. ***\*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 as policy, in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the CDC and NJDOH. (See the "Definition of Close Contact" section below)\****
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.,  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or  $\geq 2$  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**. (*see above*)\*

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, **quarantine** for the remainder of the 14 days from the last date of exposure should be implemented. Those with a positive result should **isolate** for 10 days.

### **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**

The public should **continue to be diligent** about the following while enjoying activities, **especially if not fully vaccinated**:

- Distancing six or more feet where applicable
- Wearing masks/face coverings when appropriate. It is now recommended by the CDC that masks be worn in indoor spaces in areas of substantial or high COVID activity
- Practicing hand hygiene
- Avoiding touching the eyes, nose or mouth
- Disinfecting commonly touched surfaces
- Staying home when symptomatic
- Following all of the requirements and advisories set forth in the Executive Orders and Executive Directives and Travel Advisories.
- Adhering to isolation and quarantine recommendations and orders from the Health Department’s contact tracers and disease investigators

### **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>

### **Executive Orders**

#### **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 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 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 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 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.

*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](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/>