

City of New Bedford upcoming COVID-19 testing sites, how to order free at-home rapid tests

Project Beacon's appointment-based COVID-19 testing at New Bedford Regional Airport—part of the state's Stop the Spread program—is scheduled for its regular dates next week, Sunday through Thursday.

Appointments for free COVID-19 tests can be made at beacontesting.com. Airport officials ask that people reach the site via the airport's side entrance on Downey Street.

Contact Project Beacon by email at help@beacontesting.com; or by calling 617-741-7310.

For walk-up testing, Seven Hills Behavioral Health offers free services at former Fire Station 11 in the South End on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and at PAACA on Coggeshall St. on Wednesday.

Seven Hills' testing services at former Fire Station 11 will be closed on Monday, Feb. 21, due to the Presidents' Day holiday.

For rapid tests, the federal government is offering free at-home test kits online, at COVIDtests.gov. Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order four free at-home COVID-19 tests. If you test positive with a rapid test, isolate for at least five days and notify close contacts. State guidance on isolation and quarantining can be found [here](#).

If you test negative, re-testing a day or more later is advised, particularly if you have symptoms or a known exposure

to the virus.

Testing sites in New Bedford and surrounding towns can be found on the state's Stop the Spread website, www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test.

Upcoming testing locations in New Bedford include:

Sunday, Feb. 20:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 21:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 22:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Seven Hills at former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 23:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Seven Hills at PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 24:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Seven Hills at former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 25:

- Seven Hills at former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 27:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

City of New Bedford upcoming FREE COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics, booster shots

Free, walk-up COVID-19 clinics in New Bedford offer CDC-approved booster shots, in addition to first- and second-dose vaccines and, at most locations, pediatric vaccines and boosters for teens 12-17. Please bring your vaccination card when getting a booster.

Presidents' Day Closure: The regular Monday vaccine clinic at the Andrea McCoy Recreation Center on Hillman Street will not be offered Monday, Feb. 21, due to the Presidents' Day holiday

Youth Promotion: From Feb. 12-26, youth under 20 who receive a vaccine and show ID will have the opportunity to receive a \$50 McCoy program voucher. Youth under 17 will be eligible for a YMCA year's membership and program vouchers for YMCA programming. Supplies are limited and will be distributed on a first come, first served basis. Once eligible, youth can pick up vouchers at local vaccine clinics – at PAACA and Andrea McCoy Rec Center – on Feb. 19, 25 and 26.

Visit vaxnb.com for updated schedules of local COVID-19 vaccination and testing locations. Upcoming vaccine locations

in New Bedford include:

Saturday, Feb. 19:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Sunday, Feb. 20:

- Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores (1534 Acushnet Ave.) – 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, vaccines and boosters for ages 5 and up; services provided in Spanish and K'iche' – call 774-961-8283

Tuesday, Feb. 22:

- Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, appointment required, call 508-992-6553
- Wilks Library Branch (1911 Acushnet Ave.) – 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., Moderna, Pfizer, J&J; all vaccines and boosters, for children and adults.

Wednesday, Feb. 23:

- Cape Verdean Veterans Memorial Hall (561 Purchase St.) – 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, all vaccines and boosters for children 5-11; walk-ins welcome, pre-registration encouraged, call 508-979-1692

Thursday, Feb. 24:

- Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, appointment required, call 508-992-6553
- William H. Taylor Elementary School (71 Portland St.) – 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Friday, Feb. 25:

- PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old & boosters for teens 12-17

Saturday, Feb. 26:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Monday, Feb. 28:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Reminder on the importance of vaccinations, especially during winter months: Vaccination levels in the region remain low, and daily case rates remain high. Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 is not only about protecting yourself – it's also about protecting your family, friends, and community. Vaccination is critically important during the winter months, when indoor gatherings can lead to super-spreader events, clusters, hospitalizations, and severe illness among people who are unvaccinated.

State Resources for Vaccine Records, Locations

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has free online services to find your personal vaccine records and local vaccination locations, including many pharmacies.

Access your vaccine records at <https://myvaxrecords.mass.gov/>, and find local listings at <https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/>.

City of New Bedford to Lift Mask Policy in Municipal Buildings

With the recent precipitous drop in COVID-19 transmission in New Bedford, Mayor Jon Mitchell has decided to lift the policy requiring the use of masks in the public areas of municipal buildings, such as City Hall and public libraries. The mask policy will be lifted as of 4 p.m. Friday, Feb. 18. Mayor Mitchell is grateful to everyone who has observed the mask requirement since its establishment by executive order in August 2021.

COVID-19 cases in New Bedford have fallen dramatically over the past five weeks. The City hit its peak of daily cases on Jan. 7, when 562 cases were reported over the previous 24-hour period. On Tuesday, Feb. 15, just 17 cases were reported in the previous 24 hours, a 97-percent drop from the peak.

The New Bedford Health Department is continuing with other pandemic response efforts, including the promotion of COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters, which have proven extremely effective at preventing severe COVID outcomes. The Health Department also is continuing to monitor transmission risk and the emergence of new variants that could require additional safeguards.

Upcoming FREE COVID-19 testing sites for New Bedford, how to get free at-home rapid tests

Project Beacon's appointment-based COVID-19 testing at New Bedford Regional Airport—part of the state's Stop the Spread program—is scheduled for its regular dates next week, Sunday through Thursday.

Appointments for free COVID-19 tests can be made at beacontesting.com. Airport officials ask that people reach the site via the airport's side entrance on Downey Street.

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If you test negative, re-testing a day or more later is advised, particularly if you have symptoms or a known exposure to the virus.

Testing sites in New Bedford and surrounding towns can be found on the state's Stop the Spread website,

www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test.

Upcoming testing locations in New Bedford include:

Sunday, Feb. 13:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 14:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Seven Hills at former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 15:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Seven Hills at former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 16:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Seven Hills at PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 17:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Seven Hills at former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 18:

- Seven Hills at former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 20:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
-

Upcoming FREE COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics for New Bedford

Free, walk-up COVID-19 clinics in New Bedford offer CDC-approved booster shots, in addition to first- and second-dose vaccines and, at most locations, pediatric vaccines and boosters for teens 12-17. Please bring your vaccination card when getting a booster.

Youth Promotion: From Feb. 12-26, youth under 20 who receive a vaccine and show ID will have the opportunity to receive a \$50 McCoy program voucher. Youth under 17 will be eligible for a YMCA year's membership and program vouchers for YMCA programming. Supplies are limited and will be distributed on a first come, first served basis. Once eligible, youth can pick up vouchers at local vaccine clinics – at PAACA and Andrea McCoy Rec Center – on Feb. 18, 19, 25 and 26.

Visit vaxnb.com for updated schedules of local COVID-19 vaccination and testing locations. Upcoming vaccine locations in New Bedford include:

Saturday, Feb. 12:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Monday, Feb. 14:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Tuesday, Feb. 15:

- Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, appointment required, call 508-992-6553
- Wilks Library Branch (1911 Acushnet Ave.) – 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., Moderna, Pfizer, J&J; all vaccines and boosters, for children and adults.

Thursday, Feb. 17:

- Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, appointment required, call 508-992-6553
- William H. Taylor Elementary School (71 Portland St.) – 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Friday, Feb. 18:

- PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old & boosters for teens 12-17

Saturday, Feb. 19:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Reminder on the importance of vaccinations, especially during winter months: Vaccination levels in the region remain low, and daily case rates remain high. Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 is not only about protecting yourself – it's also

about protecting your family, friends, and community. Vaccination is critically important during the winter months, when indoor gatherings can lead to super-spreader events, clusters, hospitalizations, and severe illness among people who are unvaccinated.

State Resources for Vaccine Records, Locations

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has free online services to find your personal vaccine records and local vaccination locations, including many pharmacies.

Access your vaccine records at <https://myvaxrecords.mass.gov/>, and find local listings at <https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/>.

Massachusetts officials will allow statewide school mask mandate to expire

After consulting with medical experts and state health officials, the Commissioner will not renew the state mask requirement after it expires on February 28, 2022.

The decision was made in consultation with infectious disease physicians, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and other medical experts. Vaccinations are the best protection against COVID-19, and Massachusetts has among the highest vaccination rates of young people and is a national leader in overall vaccination. In Massachusetts, 52 percent of all individuals who are fully vaccinated have received a booster dose, compared to 42 percent of the national population.

Effective Monday, February 28, the DESE mask requirement will

be lifted statewide. The Commonwealth's high vaccination rates and widespread availability of COVID-19 testing for school personnel and students support this decision.

Masking continues to be required on all school buses, per federal order.

More than 40 schools have already received approval from DESE to remove the mask requirement. With the removal of the statewide mask requirement, additional schools no longer need to apply. With the lifting of the statewide mask requirement, school districts no longer need to request a waiver from DESE to remove masks in school buildings where 80 percent of staff and students are vaccinated. Masking will be a community choice in schools across the Commonwealth, regardless of vaccination rates within a school; however, a school district could establish a local requirement.

DESE continues to recommend that districts and schools adopt a layered approach to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in school settings. DESE and DPH continue to strongly urge all eligible individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and booster and continue to support schools with vaccination clinics. Other mitigations include participating in the statewide COVID-19 testing program, maintaining good hand hygiene practices, and staying home when sick.

OPINION: New Bedford woman's family sick with COVID, feels

school was out of line for reporting it as negligence

"IS THERE A WAY I COULD POST THIS ANONYMOUSLY PLEASE. I WOULD Love to know what people thought I should have done. But people are so mean. Could we not put my name please?

My husband recently caught COVID, the week the kids were to return to school after Christmas break. I contacted all the schools letting them all know that because we tested negative AFTER testing positive that I felt it be necessary to keep my family in closed quarantine for 14 days. I and my 4 children didn't show signs yet.

A couple of the kids started to show symptoms of simple colds and I thought 'Well let's wait a couple of days to make sure it doesn't turn into COVID.' Then I got sick. I'm saying to myself, 'This can't be good right???'

I contacted the schools and told them what my plan was: I would get the kids tested on day 10. Wait for results and start life again. Or so I thought.

3 of my children's schools accepted the pediatrician letters excusing them from school because we have a large family and wanted to be considerate. What if we were carrying it right? Only 1 school decided that they wanted my son in school. They didn't care that my house was sick or that their father was damn near ready for the emergency room.

That school DECIDED TO REPORT ME for school negligence and sent an investigator to my house to check on the well-being of my children. Keep in mind my youngest has a heart defect and we literally are just trying to do what's best for everyone including ourselves.

Honest opinion without bashing. Because they decided not to

accept and report UNEXCUSED absences and not tell them THEY HAD AN ACTUAL DR NOTE.

Would you have rather me:

(A) send my child to school while there is an active COVID case in household; or

(B) keep the children home to be sure they aren't sick and to save it from spreading?

And what can I do about the nurse going against my children's doctor's note?! Isn't this a form of false accusation and character deformation when I already contacted the schools?!"

Bristol Community College, with locations that include Fall River, New Bedford announces COVID-19 vaccination rates

Bristol Community College, with locations in Attleboro, Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton, is proud to announce that it has reached a 98% COVID-19 vaccination rate among employees and a 100% COVID-19 vaccination rate among students enrolled in in-person or hybrid courses, in addition to individuals granted accommodations.

This achievement is the college's latest of many successful efforts, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, to lessen the person-to-person transmission of the virus and keep

Bristol's college community safer, including always wearing masks and personal protective equipment while indoors, social distancing and hygiene protocols, frequently consulting with public health and medical experts, as well as making COVID-19 testing and vaccinations available to employees and students.

"We are so proud of our Bristol employees and students for becoming a COVID-19 vaccinated community and for their dedication to the college's safety protocols," said Dr. Laura L. Douglas, President, Bristol Community College. "Because of the extraordinary efforts of our faculty and staff, all of our college locations are fully open, and we are able to serve our students and community now and into the future."

"While cases of COVID-19 in the college's service areas continue to be concerning, the reported cases by our Bristol employees have been very minimal throughout the pandemic. We attribute this to the college's strict protocols, ongoing collaboration with medical experts, and everyone's willingness to follow our health and safety protocols," said Jill Dumont, RN, BSN, Coordinator, Health Services, Bristol Community College "I am proud of Bristol's employees and students for serving as role models in our communities and working together to help stop the spread of the virus."

COVID-19 testing is offered at all Bristol locations, in addition to community CIC Health COVID-19 testing, hosted at the Bristol Fall River Campus. The college also continues to host COVID-19 vaccination clinics for all employees, students and community members to keep regional communities healthy and safe.

All Massachusetts community colleges have required that all students who have an in-person component be fully vaccinated by January 2022. Employees are also required to be vaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccination requirement applies to students with an on-campus component to their schedule, who seek to access on-campus services, and those who are required by program or

activity to be vaccinated as a condition of participation (e.g., clinical placements). Students who choose not to be vaccinated remain eligible to take and utilize online course offerings and services.

Upcoming New Bedford COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

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Visit vaxnb.com for updated schedules of local COVID-19 vaccination and testing locations. Upcoming vaccine locations in New Bedford include:

Saturday, Feb. 5:

Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Sunday, Feb. 6:

Workers Community Center / Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores (1534 Acushnet Ave.) – 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J & J, boosters, pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Keith Middle School (225 Hathaway Boulevard) – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Monday, Feb. 7:

Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Tuesday, Feb. 8:

Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, appointment required, call 508-992-6553

Thursday, Feb. 10:

Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, appointment required, call 508-992-6553

Hayden McFadden Elementary School (361 Cedar Grove St.) – 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Alfred J. Gomes Elementary School (286 S. 2nd St.) – 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Friday, Feb. 11:

PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old & boosters for teens 12-17

Saturday, Feb. 12:

Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

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Sunday, Feb. 6:

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 7:

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 8:

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 9:

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Seven Hills at PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 10:

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 11:

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 13:

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.