

# **New Bedford's Buttonwood Senior Center CLOSED due to COVID-19 concerns**

The Buttonwood Senior Center is closed until further notice to protect residents from COVID-19 during the latest surge in transmission of the disease, the City's Council on Aging said.

"With the number of COVID-19 cases rising rapidly across the region and entire state, the last thing we want to do, in accounting for everyone's health and safety, is encourage our seniors to congregate," Council on Aging Director Debra Lee said. "The Council on Aging has closed the Buttonwood center until case numbers show some consistency in reduction. The Council is sorry for any inconvenience this might cause, but safety must take precedence as this pandemic continues."

The Buttonwood Senior Center, also known as the Warming House, is at 1 Oneida St. in Buttonwood Park.

Earlier this month, the Council on Aging announced it was suspending transportation from the Council for anything other than social day programming, also due to COVID-19 concerns.

The City will announce the Senior Center's re-opening on its website and social media channels at a future date when COVID-19 conditions allow.

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**Massachusetts Gov. Baker**

# **activates national guard for hospital support; COVID-19 update on mask advisory**

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced additional measures to address a recent rise in COVID-19 cases and to ensure acute care hospitals have sufficient capacity to care for both COVID and non-COVID patients.

The Commonwealth's healthcare system is facing a critical staffing shortage which has contributed to the loss of approximately 500 medical/surgical and ICU hospital beds since the beginning of the year. Hospitals are also seeing a high level of patients, many due to non-COVID-related reasons.

Residents are reminded that getting a vaccine and booster remain the best way to protect against serious illness or hospitalization from COVID. The Department of Public Health (DPH) released updated COVID breakthrough data this week showing that 97% of COVID breakthrough cases in Massachusetts have not resulted in hospitalization or death. Unvaccinated individuals are five times more likely to contract COVID than fully vaccinated individuals and 31 times more likely to contract COVID than individuals who have a booster.

Massachusetts is a national leader in COVID-19 vaccinations, with over 94% of eligible residents having received at least one dose. Over 89% of the entire Massachusetts population has at least one dose, and 74% of the entire population fully vaccinated. Massachusetts also leads the nation in vaccinating communities of color, with 68% of all black residents and 67% of all Hispanic residents receiving at least one dose, compared to 42.0% of black residents and 51.7% of Hispanic residents nationally.

**National Guard Activation**

Governor Charlie Baker today will activate up to 500 members of the Massachusetts National Guard to address the non-clinical support needs of hospitals and transport systems. Up to 300 of these Guard members will begin training this week and will support 55 acute care hospitals, as well as 12 ambulance service providers across the Commonwealth.

DPH surveyed all hospitals and ambulance service providers, and in concert with the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association, has identified five key roles that non-clinical Guard personnel can serve in support hospital operations for up to 90 days:

- Non-emergency transport between facilities: driving ambulances used to transfer patients between two healthcare locations such as when patients are discharged from a hospital and transferred to a long term care facility.
- Patient observers: providing continuous or frequent observation of a patient who is at risk for harm to themselves.
- Security support: helping to maintain a safe workplace.
- In-hospital transport: bringing patients via wheelchair or, if needed, stretcher, from their patient room to tests such as x-ray or CT scan, or from the emergency department to their inpatient floor.
- Food service/tray delivery support: delivering patient meals to their rooms
- Guard personnel will be deployed to the field beginning December 27th, 2021.

## **Elective Surgery Guidance**

DPH released updated guidance to hospitals concerning nonessential, elective invasive procedures. To preserve health care personnel resources, effective 12:01am on December 27th, all hospitals are directed to postpone or cancel all nonessential elective procedures likely to result in inpatient admission in order to maintain and increase inpatient

capacity.

Patients are reminded to still seek necessary care at their hospital or from their health care provider.

### **Mask Advisory**

DPH released an updated mask advisory today, recommending that all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, wear a mask or face covering in indoor, public spaces.

DPH particularly urges this recommendation for individuals who have a weakened immune system, or are at increased risk for severe disease because of age or an underlying medical condition, or if someone in their household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is unvaccinated.

All people in Massachusetts (regardless of vaccination status) are required to continue wearing face coverings in certain settings, including transportation and health care facilities. Please see [here](#) for a complete list of venues where face coverings have remained mandatory since May 29, 2021.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's current mask requirement and Policy on Vaccination Rate Threshold issued on September 27th, 2021 is not impacted by this advisory.

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## **City of New Bedford begins distributions of FREE at-home**

# COVID-19 test kits

*Plan uses community organizations to reach vulnerable clients; City schools, libraries to also hold distribution events for priority groups.*

City health and emergency management officials are coordinating with community organizations to distribute more than 37,700 at-home COVID-19 testing kits to their clients. Priority groups include families with young children and minority racial/ethnic groups who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provided New Bedford with the 37,700 testing kits on Friday. Each kit contains two rapid antigen tests, by iHealth Labs. State officials have distributed test kits to more than 100 other municipalities.

With the holiday season here and surging levels of transmission, the focus remains on local sub-populations that are the least vaccinated and therefore most at risk for illness, as well as sub-populations that have seen sharp increases in cases since the Thanksgiving holiday.

You must be a New Bedford resident to get a test kit. Priority populations include:

- Families with young children
- Unvaccinated people
- People who identify as Hispanic, multi-racial, or as another minority racial/ethnic group
- People younger than 30

The city's distribution plan also includes a limited number of pop-up distribution events at local schools and libraries.

All distribution events are while supplies last, with a limit on the number of kits allowed per person.

## **SCHOOLS**

Distribution at local schools will start Tuesday, Dec. 21, with pop-up events for students, staff, and family members from 3 to 6 p.m. at:

- Keith Middle School (25 Hathaway Blvd)
- Normandin Middle School (81 Felton St.)
- Roosevelt Middle School (119 Frederick St.)

On Wednesday, Dec. 22, the City and New Bedford Public Schools will host pop-up events from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at:

Alfred J. Gomes Elementary School (286 S. 2nd St.)  
Sgt. William Carney Memorial Academy Elementary School (247 Elm St.)  
Hayden McFadden Elementary School (361 Cedar Grove St.)  
Abraham Lincoln School (445 Ashley Blvd.)  
Casimir Pulaski Elementary School (1097 Braley Road)

## **LIBRARIES**

- Downtown / Main (613 Pleasant St.); 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 21-22
- Wilks Branch (1911 Acushnet Ave.); 12 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 21-22
- Howland-Green Branch (3 Rodney French Boulevard); 12 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 21-22

Depending on the success of these initial events, further distributions may be announced.

## **BACKGROUND ON TEST KITS**

Residents use the tests at home. Test results are available in 15 minutes and samples do not need to go to a laboratory. People do not need a cell phone or computer for any part of the test. The tests are effective for all individuals 2 years of age and up, regardless of vaccination status or whether they have symptoms.

There is no mechanism with the at-home tests to report results and test results do not need to be reported to public health authorities. However, people who test positive should confirm their result at a COVID-19 testing site, isolate for 10 days, and notify their close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19.

For more information, visit:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/self-testing.html/>

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**OPINION: “COVID hit SouthCoast restaurant industry is hurting, if you aren’t going to tip, tell your server!”**

“Some things I wish people knew about the restaurant industry and what it’s like to be a server.

Being a server is not all that bad, it’s a great job to keep as a side job, or a seasonal job, even as a full-time job. As a server, we want to get the best possible tip so always try our hardest to give the best service as humanly possible, however, that’s not always the case.

With the industry being one of the hardest hit by COVID it has left many restaurants short-staffed – something people should always keep in mind when going out to eat. I understand some people don’t believe in tipping, that’s fine and dandy, but if

that's the case then you should let the server know beforehand that they will not be receiving a tip. Most restaurants have a tip-out policy.

How this works for some places is the server comes in already with a negative balance. Then at the end of the shift, a percentage of the gross sales is tipped out to the bar, and for some places cooks, sushi chefs, meat runners, bussers, etc.

Bad servers do not last. I repeat bad servers do not last at all in the industry. So if you for some reason receive bad service at a restaurant, there is usually a valid reason behind it.

The point being that if you think that leaving no tip or anything less than 18% is okay, please do all the servers of the industry a favor and let them know beforehand or tell them directly if there are any issues. Otherwise a majority of the time we end up paying out of pocket for your and your friend's/families' meals.

If your answer is to seek another job, well that's what a lot of great servers already did, and that my friends is why the industry faces the mess we have today.

Just some food for thought. No pun intended."-Anonymous.

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# **Boston To Require Vax Proof To Enter Many Businesses**

By Katie Lannan  
State House News Service



Patrons and staff at indoor spaces in Boston – including restaurants, bars, nightclubs, fitness facilities and entertainment venues – will need to show proof they are vaccinated against COVID-19 starting next month, under a policy Mayor Michelle Wu announced Monday that marks a major shift from current practice in the city.

Wu, who also tightened the vaccine policy for city employees, was joined for her announcement by municipal officials from Salem, Somerville and Brookline. Wu's office said those communities, along with Arlington and Cambridge, are also working to advance their own vaccine requirements.

"This region requires Boston to take major steps and for us all to work together as a community amongst communities," Brookline Select Board member Raul Fernandez said.

Wu's announcement comes five days after the Boston Public Health Commission announced the city's first confirmed cases of the omicron variant of COVID-19, in three young adults over the age of 18 who were not vaccinated and experienced mild disease without needing to be hospitalized.

"This step will help increase our vaccination numbers, which we know is the best way to keep our community safe and thriving," Wu said. "Although Boston's vaccination rates have been high, we continue to see serious disparities by race and by age, allowing omicron and other new variants to spread in our communities. Vaccines are the most powerful tool in fighting this pandemic, once again, and they're the most powerful tool to allow us to recover as a city and to truly be together."

BPHC Executive Director Dr. Bisola Ojikutu said the number of COVID-19 cases in Boston has increased almost 90 percent compared to two weeks ago, with the city now averaging 369 new cases a day. She said hospital resources are "stretched thin" and that an estimated two-thirds of those hospitalized with

COVID-19 in the city are unvaccinated.

Ojikutu, who issued the order establishing the proof-of-vaccine policy projected that the city's case numbers will "rise significantly" in January based on the omicron variant's transmissibility.

Under Boston's policy for indoor dining, fitness and entertainment establishments, dubbed the B Together initiative, workers and patrons age 12 and up will be required to show proof of at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine starting Jan. 15.

Proof of full vaccination – acceptable forms include the CDC vaccination card, a photo of the card, "any official immunization record or digital image from a pharmacy or health care provider, or on any COVID-19 vaccine verification app" – will be required for those 12 and up as of Feb. 15.

For children age 5-11, the youngest age group for which COVID-19 shots are currently authorized, proof of a first dose will be required as of March 1, with full vaccination required starting the first day of May.

In August, Acting Mayor Kim Janey imposed a rule requiring the city's 18,000 workers to get vaccinated or submit to weekly testing for COVID-19. Wu said Monday that the city will drop the testing option "along the same timeline" as the new proof-of-vaccination requirement, with a first dose by Jan. 15 and second shot a month later.

Boston officials said the city plans to create its own proof-of-vaccination app, modeled after the Key to NYC app in New York City. Wu said she has been in touch with New York officials, where a similar vaccine requirement has been in place for months.

"Indoor vaccine mandates and mandates in general increase vaccination rates," Ojikutu said. "After New York City

implemented its indoor vaccination mandate, known as the Key to New York City program, citywide vaccinations increased by 9 percent in just one month, and the number of doses administered has risen steadily since the implementation.”

Ojikutu had to raise her voice during her remarks to be heard over protesters who arrived at City Hall while she was speaking. The group chanted, used whistles and at one point sang the “The Star-Spangled Banner” as officials described the new policy and their reasoning behind implementing it.

“Welcome to the people’s building,” Wu told the crowd of shouting demonstrators. “I just want to emphasize, there is nothing more American than coming together to ensure that we are taking care of each other, that each and every one of our community members is safe, is healthy and has access to the future and opportunities they deserve.”

A group called Boston First Responders United, which opposes vaccine mandates, criticized Wu’s policy ahead of her announcement, issuing what it described as “a call to action to our brothers and sisters in all law enforcement unions.”

“We especially remind our fellow members of law enforcement that civil rights and worker’s rights cannot be suspended, abridged, or revoked in America,” the group said in a statement, which also said any ongoing contract negotiations should be suspended.

Wu said Boston officials are “in conversations with all of our city unions to proceed along all the processes that are required.” She said more than 90 percent of the city’s workforce is fully vaccinated and that she is “confident that that number will continue to grow as we host on-site clinics in partnership with each of our departments.”

Sen. Will Brownsberger, a Belmont Democrat whose district includes parts of Boston, was on hand for Wu’s press conference, as was City Councilor Lydia Edwards, a candidate

for an open state Senate seat. On Twitter, House Ways and Means Chairman Aaron Michlewitz, a North End Democrat, called the vaccine-proof requirement “a bold and necessary step for many of us to feel safe when going out and dining out in Boston.”

Republican gubernatorial candidate Geoff Diehl, meanwhile, called the policies “clear violations of the civil rights of anyone who lives in, works in, or travels to the city” and said they “will make it even more difficult for Boston’s economy to recover from the pandemic.”

Diehl’s campaign also distributed a photo of him inside Boston City Hall, saying it was “taken this morning during the Boston First Responders’ Rally.”

The Boston Public Health Commission order – which says it will remain in effect until the executive director rescinds it – calls for “all reasonable efforts” to be made “to secure voluntary compliance,” including outreach, education and written warnings. It also allows for fines of \$300 per violation “and orders of the BPHC to cease and desist.”

Christopher Carlozzi, state director for the National Federation of Independent Businesses, called it unfortunate that “private businesses are being placed in the unenviable position of having to enforce another government health directive.”

“City officials should take every step imaginable to ensure consumers know this is a city policy, and are aware business owners and their workers are simply being forced to abide by these latest rules,” he said.

Boston’s planned outreach and support efforts for businesses include a series of webinars and what Wu’s office described as “a weeks-long campaign to educate residents and businesses about the new policy, utilizing city outreach workers and inspectional services.”

Temple Gill of the Huntington Theatre Company, an organization that requires vaccines for its staff and artists and has been checking its patrons for proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test, said the new city policy “means that arts organizations don’t have to shoulder the responsibility of these decisions alone.”

According to the mayor’s office, 68 percent of Boston residents were fully vaccinated as of Dec. 14, and 79 percent had received at least one dose.

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## **COVID-19 testing at New Bedford regional airport extended**

Project Beacon’s appointment-based COVID-19 testing at New Bedford Regional Airport has been extended through March 2022 and has added an additional day of testing on Jan. 5 to accommodate post-holiday demand.

Effective Jan. 2, 2022, Project Beacon—part of the state’s Stop the Spread program—will continue offering COVID-19 testing at 1569 Airport Road on its current schedule:

- Sundays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Mondays, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Tuesdays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

That schedule will continue through March 31, 2022. Additionally, Project Beacon has added a day of testing—from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022—in expectance of

large demand after holiday gatherings.

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

**All local COVID-19 vaccine and testing locations will be closed on Dec. 24, Dec. 25, and Dec. 31, 2021, and on Jan. 1, 2022.**

Other 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](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test).

Holiday testing locations in New Bedford include:

**Sunday, Dec. 19:**

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

**Monday, Dec. 20:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Tuesday, Dec. 21:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

**Wednesday, Dec. 22:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Seven Hills at PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Thursday, Dec. 23:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

**Sunday, Dec. 26:**

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

**Monday, Dec. 27:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Tuesday, Dec. 28:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

**Wednesday, Dec. 29:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Seven Hills at PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Thursday, Dec. 30:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.
  - Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
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# Surge Renews Debate Over Indoor Mask Mandate in Massachusetts

By Matt Murphy

State House News Service

Nearly seven months ago as he declared the COVID-19 pandemic “pretty much over,” Gov. Charlie Baker lifted the state’s indoor mask mandate, along with most other pandemic restrictions, with the belief that the state’s strong vaccination rates would keep the virus in abeyance.

But with COVID-19 again on the march, pressure is building for the governor to revisit the idea of requiring masks in all indoor public settings, regardless of vaccination status, as the holidays and colder weather push people inside and bring friends and families together for shopping, dinners, parties and other festivities.

Leading doctors in Massachusetts are now recommending that residents wear masks in public indoor spaces, and some legislators are speaking up about their desire to see a more uniform approach to masking statewide, rather than the mishmash of rules that exist from community to community.

A number of states, including New York and California, have brought back their statewide mask mandates, but so far Baker has resisted calls to revisit the policy, preferring to allow cities and towns to set their own requirements for masks, with some exceptions.

“There are no plans to bring back the statewide mask mandate,” Baker said Monday, asked about the idea at a press conference where he announced plans to send 2.1 million rapid at-home COVID-19 tests to 102 cities and towns for free distribution



this holiday season.

Baker noted that masks are still required in most public schools, long-term care facilities, health care settings and on public transportation. The school mask mandate is set to expire on Jan. 15.

"Keep in mind that we're in a very different place than we were in before. Five million people are fully vaccinated. A million and a half of those are boosted. Over 6 million people have at least one dose," Baker said.

Still, Dr. Carole Allen, president of the Massachusetts Medical Society, said Tuesday that the growing number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations point to "an alarming upward trend" that is straining the state's health care system. The Department of Public Health on Monday reported 11,078 new cases from over the weekend, and hospitalizations from the virus climbed to 1,355, while the positive test rate dropped back below 5 percent to 4.79 percent.

The Massachusetts Medical Society urged all residents, regardless of their vaccination status, to resume wearing masks in indoor public settings.

"Masking is a public health measure proven to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Wearing masks while indoors is an effective and appropriate way to slow transmission of the disease, especially with the holiday and cold and flu seasons upon us. We must all work together to take steps to confront and stem what could be a continued rise in cases, hospitalizations, serious illness, and death," Allen said in a statement.

California and New York are among the states that have already taken the step to mask up once again, with California's new statewide mask mandate going into effect on Wednesday, and New York's having begun on Monday. In the Empire State, the masking requirements do not apply to businesses that require

proof-of-vaccination for entry, and the policy will be revisited on Jan. 15.

Oregon, New Mexico, Washington, Hawaii and Nevada have also put statewide mask mandates back into place as cases surge around the country, and the omicron variant poses a new, and not-well-understood threat.

Baker is not alone, however, in trying to navigate the latest surge without requiring all residents to once again don masks as they go about their daily lives. Rhode Island Gov. Dan McKee is expected to announce a set of actions on Wednesday to combat the recent surge of COVID-19 cases in his state, but said last week he was "not ready" to return to an indoor mask mandate.

Jon Hurst, president the Retailers Association of Massachusetts, said his organization opposes a return to mask mandates.

"Choice should prevail, because no one store, restaurant, etc., are the same," Hurst said in an email. "The views of employees, customers, the size of your facility, the average time of customers in your establishment; it's all over the map. The small business owner knows better than government, particularly one year into vaccinations, and nearly 2 years into restrictions and public messaging that has cut sales AND raised costs."

Hurst said that because state and federal grant and loan programs for small businesses have expired any new COVID-19 restrictions must be accompanied by tax cuts, grants, health insurance premium cuts, or other benefits for business owners.

The Joint Committee on COVID-19 and Emergency Preparedness and Management plans an oversight hearing on Thursday where lawmakers will get a chance to probe the Baker administration's latest responses to the pandemic, including at-home testing, limits on non-essential hospital procedures

and masks. Health and Humans Services Secretary Marylou Sudders and state Public Health Acting Commissioner Margret Cooke are among those invited to testify.

Rep. William Driscoll, the committee's House chair, recently said he supports a new universal mask mandate, according to the Boston Herald, and other members of the committee have expressed similar sentiments.

"Disappointing news given that the interest in preventing community spread which underlies today's decision around distributing rapid tests could also be used to justify a statewide indoor mask mandate," tweeted Rep. Mindy Domb, a committee member, after the governor's press conference on Monday.

"Why haven't we learned that a patchwork response, forcing cities and towns to make this decision doesn't work...," Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa echoed on Twitter.

While masks are still required in most public schools, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education said that as of Monday it had received 36 requests to lift the mask mandate in schools that achieved at least 80 percent vaccination, including 27 public high schools, five public middle schools and four special education schools serving primarily high-school age children.

Of those requests, DESE had granted 28 waivers, though the department said it is aware anecdotally of a number of districts that have decided to keep their mask mandates in place at least through the holidays despite their approval for students and teachers to drop the masks.

A spokeswoman also said the department was unaware of any districts that had returned to requiring masks after dropping their local mandate, and the Hopkinton School Committee voted earlier this month to extend that town's mask-free policy for another three weeks after experiencing success with its

initial trial.

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# **New Bedford vaccination clinics adjusted during holidays**

Scheduling for local COVID-19 vaccination clinics will be adjusted during the 10-day period around Christmas Day and New Year's Day, with fewer options in order to accommodate the holidays. Check [vaxnb.com](https://vaxnb.com) for updated schedules of local COVID-19 vaccination and testing locations.

All local COVID-19 vaccine and testing locations will be closed on Dec. 24, Dec. 25, and Dec. 31, 2021, and on Jan. 1, 2022.

Free, walk-up clinics offer CDC-approved booster shots, in addition to first- and second-dose vaccines and, at most locations, pediatric vaccines. Please bring your vaccination card when getting a booster.

## **Tuesday, Dec. 14:**

- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., J&J, Pfizer and Moderna; pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old
- Alfred J. Gomes Elementary School (286 S. 2nd St.) – 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Pfizer, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

## **Wednesday, Dec. 15:**

- Jacobs Elementary School (47 Emery St.) – 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.,

Pfizer, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

**Thursday, Dec. 16:**

- New Bedford High School (230 Hathaway Blvd.) – 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old
- Hayden McFadden Elementary School (361 Cedar Grove St.) – 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., Pfizer, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

**Friday, Dec. 17:**

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

**Saturday, Dec. 18:**

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J; pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

**Sunday, Dec. 19:**

- Abraham Lincoln School (445 Ashley Blvd) – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Pfizer, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

**Monday, Dec. 20:**

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old; Moderna boosters

**Tuesday, Dec. 21:**

- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., J&J, Pfizer and Moderna; pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

**Monday, Dec. 27:**

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old; Moderna boosters

**Tuesday, Dec. 28:**

- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., J&J, Pfizer and Moderna; pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

**Reminder on the importance of vaccinations, especially ahead of the holidays:** 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 holiday season, when large family gatherings could lead to super-spreader events among people who are unvaccinated.

City leaders and health officials are urging unvaccinated residents to get their first shot and begin vaccination as soon as possible, in order to have safe and healthy holidays.

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## **FDA expands eligibility for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 booster to 16-17 year-olds**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration amended the emergency use authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, authorizing the use of a single booster dose for administration to individuals 16 and 17 years of age at least six months after completion of primary vaccination with the

## Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

“Vaccination and getting a booster when eligible, along with other preventive measures like masking and avoiding large crowds and poorly ventilated spaces, remain our most effective methods for fighting COVID-19,” said Acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock, M.D. “As people gather indoors with family and friends for the holidays, we can’t let up on all the preventive public health measures that we have been taking during the pandemic. With both the delta and omicron variants continuing to spread, vaccination remains the best protection against COVID-19.”

On Nov. 19, the FDA authorized the use of a single booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for administration to all individuals 18 years of age and older after completion of primary vaccination with any FDA-authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccine. Today’s action expands the use of a single booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for administration to individuals 16 and 17 years of age at least six months after completion of a primary series of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. The FDA-authorized Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine and the FDA-approved Comirnaty (COVID-19 Vaccine, mRNA) are the only COVID-19 vaccines currently available for the 16- and 17-year-old age group. Individuals who are 16 and 17 years of age should only receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine or Comirnaty as their booster dose.

“The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine has been available to individuals 16 years of age and older for nearly a year, and its benefits have been shown to clearly outweigh potential risks,” said Peter Marks, M.D., Ph.D., director of the FDA’s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research. “Since we first authorized the vaccine, new evidence indicates that vaccine effectiveness against COVID-19 is waning after the second dose of the vaccine for all adults and for those in the 16- and 17-year-old age group. A single booster dose of the vaccine for

those vaccinated at least six months prior will help provide continued protection against COVID-19 in this and older age groups.”

### **Data Supporting Effectiveness**

The EUA for a single booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for individuals 16 and 17 years of age is based on the FDA’s previous analysis of immune response data that supported use of a booster dose in individuals 18 years of age and older.

The FDA had analyzed the immune response data from approximately 200 participants, 18 through 55 years of age, who received a single booster dose approximately six months after their second dose. The antibody response against the SARS-CoV-2 virus one month after a booster dose of the vaccine, when compared to the response one month after the two-dose primary series in the same individuals, demonstrated a booster response. The FDA’s assessment of the effectiveness of a booster dose for individuals 16 and 17 years of age is based on these data. Based on the available data for individuals 18 and older regarding effectiveness, the FDA has concluded that these data support extending the eligible booster age population to 16- and 17-year-olds.

### **FDA Evaluation of Benefits and Risks**

In the time since Pfizer initially submitted safety and effectiveness data on a single booster dose following the two-dose primary series to the FDA, additional real-world data have become available on the increasing number of cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. and on the risk of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the outer lining of the heart) following vaccination with the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. These additional data enabled the FDA to reassess the benefits and risks of the use of the vaccine in a wider population. The FDA has determined that the benefits of a single booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine or Comirnaty outweigh the



risks of myocarditis and pericarditis in individuals 16 and 17 years of age to provide continued protection against COVID-19 and the associated serious consequences that can occur including hospitalization and death.

Pfizer is conducting post-authorization/post-marketing studies to assess known serious risks of myocarditis and pericarditis. In addition, the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have several systems in place to continually monitor COVID-19 vaccine safety and allow for the rapid detection and investigation of potential safety concerns.

The fact sheets for recipients and caregivers and for healthcare providers contain information about the potential side effects, as well as the risk of myocarditis and pericarditis. The most commonly reported side effects by individuals who received a booster dose were pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, as well as fatigue, headache, muscle or joint pain and chills. Of note, swollen lymph nodes in the underarm were observed more frequently following the booster dose than after the second dose of a two-dose primary series.

The FDA did not hold a meeting of the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee on today's action, as the agency previously convened the committee for extensive discussions regarding the use of booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines and, after review of Pfizer's EUA request, the FDA concluded that the request does not raise questions that would benefit from additional discussion by committee members. The FDA will be publicly posting documents regarding the agency's decision on its website following authorization.

The amendment to the EUA was granted to Pfizer Inc.

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# **Upcoming New Bedford Vaccination Clinics; booster shots and in-home vaccinations available**

Free, walk-up COVID-19 vaccination clinics are offered regularly in New Bedford. Clinics offer CDC-approved booster shots for eligible adults, in addition to first- and second-dose vaccines and, at some locations, pediatric vaccines. Please bring your vaccination card when getting a booster. Details on boosters and pediatric vaccines are below.

## **Tuesday, Dec. 7:**

- Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J
- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., J&J, Pfizer and Moderna; pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old
- Immigrant Assistance Center (58 Crapo St. #1) – 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. J&J, Pfizer and Moderna; pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

## **Friday, Dec. 10:**

- PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., J&J, Pfizer and Moderna; pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

## **Saturday, Dec. 11:**

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J; pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

## **Monday, Dec. 13:**

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J; pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old

**Pediatric Vaccines Available:** COVID-19 vaccines for children 5 to 11 years old are available at local clinics, including Mondays at the Andrea McCoy Recreation Center, Tuesdays at former Fire Station 11 on Brock Avenue, and Fridays at PAACA on Coggeshall Street.

“McCoy Mondays” are One-Stop Shop for Vaccines: With the arrival of pediatric vaccines at Andrea McCoy Recreation Center, the center’s Monday clinics from 2 to 7 p.m. – upcoming dates include Nov. 15, and 22, and 29 – are “one-stop shops” for families and people of all ages seeking COVID-19 protection, whether it be first or second doses of Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J vaccines, boosters, or pediatric vaccines.

**In-Home Vaccination Available by Appointment:** The city and state are offering in-home COVID-19 vaccinations, particularly for elderly residents or those not able to travel to a clinic. To schedule an in-home vaccination (Moderna or J&J) with the New Bedford Health Department, call the department’s main line, 508-991-6199, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.

To schedule an in-home vaccination (Moderna, Pfizer or J&J) through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, call the In-Home Vaccination Central Intake Line at (833) 983-0485, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

For more information:  
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-in-home-vaccination-program>.

**Booster Shots Approved for Eligible Recipients:** The CDC has approved booster recommendations for Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J vaccines. Booster shots are available at local vaccine clinics, for people who are eligible under the following

criteria.

Anyone 18 and older who received a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is eligible for a booster shot six months or more after their initial series.

Please bring your vaccination card when getting a booster shot, to verify eligibility.

For anyone 18 and older who got the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, a booster shot is recommended two months or more after their initial shot.

**Mixing & Matching:** The CDC also has approved mixing and matching of vaccine types for the booster dose. When first getting vaccinated, people should still get two doses of the same vaccine type, but for the booster, a different vaccine from the initial series can be used, following the criteria above.

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

Reminder on the importance of vaccinations, especially ahead of the holidays: 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 holiday season, when large family gatherings could lead to super-spreader events among people who are unvaccinated.

City leaders and health officials are urging unvaccinated residents to get their first shot and begin vaccination as soon as possible, in order to have safe and healthy holidays.