

# Massachusetts Department of Public Health Updates COVID-19 Death Definition

Beginning Monday, March 14, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) will update the criteria used for identifying COVID-19 deaths to align with guidance from the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. Currently, the COVID death definition includes anyone who has COVID listed as a cause of death on their death certificate, and any individual who has had a COVID-19 diagnosis within 60 days but does not have COVID listed as a cause of death on their death certificate. The updated definition reduces this timeframe from 60 days to 30 days for individuals without a COVID diagnosis on their death certificate.

The revision follows the recommendation of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), in collaboration with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to create a standardized approach for states to use for counting COVID-19 deaths. Several other states are adopting this definition.

Massachusetts has applied this new definition retroactively to the start of the pandemic in March 2020. As a result, 4,081 deaths in Massachusetts that were previously counted as associated with COVID will be removed. In addition, approximately 400 deaths not previously counted but identified through a manual process of matching death certificates with medical records will be added to the COVID-19 death count. The state's overall COVID death count, therefore, will decline by 3,700.

"We are adopting the new definition because we support the need to standardize the way COVID-19-associated deaths are

counted,” said DPH State Epidemiologist Dr. Catherine Brown. “Prior to the CSTE definition, states did not have a nationally recommended definition for COVID-19 deaths and, as such, have been using a variety of processes and definitions to count their deaths. In Massachusetts, our definition has consistently been broader than most other states. After a deep dive into our data and reviewing thousands of death certificates we recognize that this updated definition gives us a truer picture of mortality associated with COVID-19.”

“It is important to understand that we cannot identify all COVID-19 deaths with 100 percent accuracy,” said Nicolas Menzies, Associate Professor of Global Health at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. “The revised definition for COVID-19 deaths is a reasonable balance between sensitivity and specificity and will make it easier to compare Massachusetts death data with data from other jurisdictions.”

“Updating this important metric is a necessary step to help us better gauge the current severity of the pandemic and its impact on our health system and society as a whole,” said Dr. Helen Boucher, Interim Dean of Tufts University School of Medicine, Chief Academic Officer at Tufts Medicine and infectious disease physician at Tufts Medical Center and member of the Governor’s Medical Advisory Board. “The ability to be nimble and quickly adapt to changing circumstances demonstrates Massachusetts’ continued leadership in COVID-19 data reporting and analysis.”

Early in the pandemic, and absent clear national guidance, DPH matched COVID-19 surveillance case information with death certificates to identify deaths in people who tested positive for the virus but did not have COVID listed as a cause of death. To avoid the possibility of missing any COVID-associated death, anyone who tested positive for COVID and died was counted as a COVID-associated death regardless of the length of time between their diagnosis and their death or whether COVID was listed as the cause on their death

certificate. This approach was overly broad and led to an overcounting of COVID-19-associated deaths.

Beginning in April 2021, based on the growing knowledge about COVID-19 and an analysis of deaths in Massachusetts up to that point, DPH updated the way it counted deaths. COVID-19-associated deaths still included anyone with COVID-19 listed as a cause of death on the death certificate but DPH also applied a 60-day timeframe from diagnosis to death for anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 but who did not have COVID-19 on the death certificate.

This latest update further reduces the timeframe between diagnosis and death from 60 days to 30 days for individuals without COVID listed on the death certificate. The new definition will be reflected in the COVID-19 interactive dashboard data on Monday, March 14.

Beginning Monday, all calculations involving deaths posted in the COVID-19 dashboard and the raw data file will contain the updated data. Previous raw data files will still be available on the website and will not be updated.

Deaths in long-term care facilities (LTCF) will continue to be reported directly from those facilities, but the updated definition will align surveillance deaths more closely with the LTCF-reported counts.

Several new data points and some changes in functionality and visualizations are also being added to the COVID-19 dashboard, beginning Monday. No data are being eliminated and the changes are designed to enhance the interactive experience for dashboard users and to ensure compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

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# Massachusetts Public Health Reports “Significant Overcount” of COVID Deaths

By Chris Lisinski

State House News Service

When state public health officials publish Monday’s report about the latest COVID-19 impacts on Massachusetts, the cumulative death toll through two years of the pandemic will suddenly stand about 15 percent lower.

The Baker administration will start using a new public health surveillance definition next week, narrowing the window of time between a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis and death required for the fatality to get attributed to the highly infectious virus.

Saying the Bay State’s earlier methodology led to a “significant overcount of deaths,” officials said Thursday they will adopt a new system recommended by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists.

And in a step that could reshape understanding of the pandemic’s impact on Massachusetts, the administration will apply the new method retroactively, resulting in 4,081 deaths once linked to the virus being recategorized as stemming from other causes and roughly 400 others newly being labeled as COVID-19 deaths.

“We think this is an absolutely critical step in improving our understanding of who COVID has impacted most significantly during the pandemic,” said state epidemiologist Dr. Catherine Brown. “We believe that this will provide us a much more accurate picture of who has died associated with a COVID infection in Massachusetts, and it will also improve our

ability to compare our data with data from other jurisdictions.”

For the duration of the pandemic, state officials have deemed a fatality COVID-related if it met at least one of three criteria: if a case investigation determined the virus “caused” or “contributed” to the death, if the death certificate listed COVID-19 or an “equivalent term” as the cause, or if state public health surveillance linked a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis to a Bay Stater’s death.

The first two measures remain unchanged since the earliest days of the crisis, but the third has already been updated once and is set to evolve again on Monday.

From March 2020 to March 2021, DPH counted the death of any person who had previously tested positive for COVID-19 as a COVID-related death, regardless of how much time elapsed between those two events.

Even if someone contracted the virus in March and died in a car crash in July, they were added to the ongoing tally of pandemic deaths for that first year.

“This strategy worked well at the beginning of the pandemic, and in fact, a paper was published last summer in the Journal of the American Medical Association, which lauded our efforts here in Massachusetts in counting deaths that occurred during the first wave of the pandemic as opposed to several other jurisdictions,” said Public Health Commissioner Margret Cooke. “But over time, our approach proved to be too expansive and led to a significant overcount of deaths in Massachusetts. People who had gotten COVID earlier in 2020 and died for other reasons ended up still being included in COVID-associated death counts.”

The department updated its approach for the third criterion in April 2021, officials said Thursday, keeping the death investigation and death certificate triggers in place. Under

that method, officials counted only those who died within 60 days of a COVID diagnosis as deaths related to the virus, unless their death was clearly linked to another cause such as trauma.

That system remained in place for most of 2021 and will be replaced in Monday's daily report by the new definition, recommended in December by the national consortium of state public health leaders after months of study.

The new method suggested by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists calls for counting deaths within 30 days of a COVID-19 diagnosis where "natural causes" is labeled on a death certificate as attributable to the virus, half as long a timeframe as under the most recent definition in Massachusetts.

Brown said the update will "make sure that what we are capturing is the acute impact of COVID."

"People who are seriously ill and hospitalized for longer and end up dying after that 30 days have almost invariably had COVID listed on their death certificate, so they end up being counted under another method," Brown said.

As has been the case throughout the pandemic, if an official death investigation determined the virus caused or contributed or if a death certificate lists COVID-19 or an equivalent term, that fatality will add to the pandemic death toll.

Brown said the vast majority of the 4,081 deaths that will no longer be deemed COVID-related, about 95 percent, occurred between May 2020 and May 2021, covering the tail end of the state's first surge and its second surge that winter. Most of the roughly 400 deaths that will acquire a COVID label also happened in that span, Brown said.

Taken together, the removals and additions net out to a reduction in the cumulative COVID-19 death toll of about 3,700

people, more than the entire population of Provincetown.

DPH does not expect to have a new tally for the number of COVID-19 deaths in Massachusetts until it publishes new data on its COVID-19 dashboard around 5 p.m. on Monday. Back-end work to merge datasets will take place over the weekend, according to Brown.

It also remains unclear if the change in Massachusetts will send out ripple effects across the country.

Asked if other states planned to adopt the national council's recommended methodology as well, Brown said that the new definition planned for rollout in Massachusetts is "actually much more consistent with what many other jurisdictions are already using."

"This is a recommended guidance definition, and it is designed to help improve comparability across jurisdictions, across states. But we have also heard from a few jurisdictions that they are not planning on updating the way they count deaths," she said. "What's really important is that this change to the definition will actually increase the ability to compare the counts in Massachusetts with other jurisdictions because it will be more similar to what most other jurisdictions are using."

The U.S. Center and Disease Control's online tracker on Thursday listed 959,533 total COVID-19 deaths across the country since Jan. 21, 2020. Massachusetts had the 13th-most total deaths among states and the 11th-highest rate of deaths per 100,000 residents, both of which will likely change when the updated death toll is published next week.

As of 5 p.m. Wednesday, Massachusetts health officials had recorded 23,708 confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths since the outbreak first began, so that figure is likely to drop to around 20,000 on Monday.

The new methodology will also apply to weekly reporting about COVID-19 cases in vaccinated individuals, the next version of which is set for publication on Tuesday.

Brown added that preliminary analysis did not show any significant changes to the distribution of deaths by age group, sex and race or ethnicity once the new definition was applied.

“While we absolutely acknowledge that we’re moving to a more accurate and appropriate way to count deaths, it doesn’t change our understanding, it does not alter our understanding, of who has died from COVID and where the most disproportionate impacts have been,” Brown said.

The Baker administration appears not to have made as public an announcement about the first change to its statewide COVID-19 death definition as the latest update. Officials said in April 2021 that they would change how deaths were counted specifically in long-term care facilities to align with the CDC’s national definition, but made no mention in that press release of the broader change imposing a 60-day limit on the span between an infection and death to count in some cases.

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## **Southcoast Health announces Southcoast CARES Program, part of community health, wellness department**

*Emphasis on overall community health and wellbeing by focusing on Southcoast CARES initiatives that extend beyond clinical*



*care.*

Southcoast Health is proud to announce its Southcoast CARES program, part of the newly rebranded Community Health and Wellness department formerly known as Community Benefits. This title change reflects the department's expanded focus on Southcoast CARES initiatives, which work to improve health equity and health status across the entire South Coast region. The Community Health and Wellness department also includes Community Relations, Data Analysis and Reporting.

"Socioeconomic indicators such as income, education, race and zip code are major factors that directly influence health outcomes and are often the best predictors of health status and health equity," says Rachel Davis, Director of Community Health and Wellness at Southcoast Health. "We are proud to strengthen our community outreach efforts with this comprehensive redesign of the program, and we thank our dedicated staff and community partners for their continued support addressing these challenges in our community."

Southcoast CARES initiatives exemplify the health system's commitment to community outreach, beyond clinical care, to best serve and support all residents of the region. The program is composed of three strategic areas—Community Wellness Initiatives, Community Engagement and Impact and Community Health Improvement Planning—to address the current and future health and social needs of our region.

- **Community Wellness Initiatives:** Programs that support ongoing population health initiatives and expand access to services, outreach, education and connection to basic health and social resources. These programs include the new Community Wellness Program, The New Beginnings Program, The Basics, Southcoast and The Southcoast Resource Connect Platform.

- **Community Engagement and Impact:** Southcoast's community support through contributions, coalition participation,

volunteerism efforts and grant programs.

- **Community Health Improvement Planning:** A community-driven initiative that focuses on collaboration with a diverse group of South Coast residents and leaders to create long-term, transformational change to the overall health and wellness of the region.

“As we continue developing new community health initiatives, it is important that we not only react to specific community needs but proactively address them,” says Davis. “Focusing on initiatives targeting socio-economic needs, we are hoping to get ahead of the root causes of many current health problems and break the cycle.”

To learn more about Southcoast’s Community Health & Wellness department, including Southcoast CARES please visit Southcoast Health CARES – Southcoast Health.

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## **About Southcoast Health**

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As a network of more than 700 physicians, hospitalists, and mid-level practitioners, Southcoast Health is a system of three acute care hospitals – Charlton Memorial Hospital in Fall River, St. Luke's Hospital in New Bedford, and Tobey Hospital in Wareham, and also provides behavioral health services in partnership with Acadia at Southcoast Behavioral Health in Dartmouth. Southcoast Health's System comprises seven Urgent Care Centers, two Centers for Cancer Care, visiting nurse association, and numerous additional ambulatory facilities that offer convenience and access to services for more than 724,000 residents in 33 communities covering over 900 square miles in Southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

With around 7,500 employees, Southcoast Health is the largest employer in Southeastern Mass., and one of the largest employers in the Commonwealth, according to the Boston Business Journal. Southcoast Health is proud of our mission of providing high-quality, affordable healthcare to our patients and proud of our tradition of eliminating the barriers that prevent access to care. More information is available online at [www.southcoast.org](http://www.southcoast.org). Connect to Southcoast Health through social media on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Southcoast® is a registered trademark of Southcoast Health System.

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## **New Bedford Suspends COVID Vaccination/Testing Policy**

# For Municipal Employees

Due to a precipitous decline in the number of COVID cases locally, the City of New Bedford is suspending its COVID vaccination/testing policy for municipal employees.

Earlier today, Mayor Jon Mitchell directed the City's Personnel Office to cease implementation and enforcement of the City's COVID vaccination/testing policy across city government, effective immediately. Employees who had chosen to comply with the policy by producing a negative COVID test on a weekly basis will no longer be required to do so, and new employees will not be required to submit proof of vaccination going forward.

COVID cases in New Bedford have fallen dramatically over the past several weeks. The City hit its peak of daily cases on January 7, when 562 cases were reported over the previous day. As of Monday, February 28, the City is seeing an average of 23 cases per day over the past week—a 96% decline in cases from the January peak.

The City of New Bedford's employee vaccination/testing policy was first announced in August 2021, negotiated with employee unions in the fall, and implemented on November 15 for most of the City's approximately 1,100 non-school employees. The primary goal of the policy was to protect residents and staff, as well as set an example for public and private employers in Greater New Bedford. 825 City employees subject to the policy were recorded as fully vaccinated—a rate of 74 percent, compared to New Bedford's general population vaccination rate of about 57 percent.

More than 200 employees chose to comply through weekly testing. In many instances, the weekly tests revealed COVID infections that would have otherwise gone undiagnosed. As a result, COVID-positive employees were prevented from coming

into work and likely infecting colleagues or residents with whom they would have interacted.

No City employees were terminated or issued disciplinary suspensions for non-compliance with the policy. In some instances, employees who failed to supply timely testing results were denied entry to the workplace until test results were submitted. In these cases, employees had their accrued personal or vacation time reduced accordingly.

The City will continue to honor the employee benefits negotiated in agreements with the Police, Fire, AFSCME unions during 2021. The City reserves the right to reinstitute the vaccination and testing policy should a new COVID-related public health threat emerge in the future.

The New Bedford Health Department will also continue to focus on other aspects of the pandemic response, including the promotion of vaccinations and boosters which continue to be highly effective at preventing severe COVID outcomes. The Health Department will also continue to monitor transmission risk and the emergence of new variants that could require additional safeguards.

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## **New Bedford Public Schools to make masks optional, March 7**

New Bedford Public Schools will be updating its COVID-19 protocols including making masks optional starting Monday, March 7, 2022 for students and staff, as well as aligning COVID-19 testing procedures more closely with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Public Health, Superintendent Thomas Anderson announced today

in a letter to parents, guardians and caregivers.

“In lieu of the current in-school Test and Stay program, we will be participating in an at-home testing program that will help maximize testing for participating students and staff, despite their vaccination status,” Superintendent Anderson noted, adding, “This at-home testing option will begin during the week of February 28, 2022 and we will continue with school symptomatic testing for students who become ill during the school day. We will no longer use the Test and Stay Program and will not conduct contact tracing for in-school close contacts. This new at-home testing opportunity is voluntary and parents must sign-up to receive the tests.”

To receive the free antigen tests kits, parents/guardians must opt-in to the at-home testing program by completing an opt-in form for each child by Friday, February 25, 2022. Forms are available online at [newbedfordschools.org](https://newbedfordschools.org). For additional information, please contact your school or the NBPS Health Services Department at 508-997-4511, extension 14432.

Of his decision to lift the mask requirement while also making optional their continued use, Superintendent Anderson stated, “Last week Governor Baker and education Commissioner Riley lifted the state-wide mask mandate for schools. In consideration of this change to current mask mandate, we have evaluated several factors, including virus transmission rates, vaccination information for eligible students and adults, and the impact on student social emotional well-being. We have several mitigation strategies in place that will mostly continue including the over 900 air exchange units in our buildings and cleaning and disinfecting processes.

“Over the last few days I have received consistent overwhelming feedback from parents, some students, and staff suggesting that we also lift the mask mandate. To allow us time to transition to our new testing program and provide some time after the February Break due to past increased positivity

rates in the days immediately following holidays and/or vacations, the mask mandate for New Bedford Public Schools will end at the end of the school day on Friday, March 4 – except on school busses and in health offices. Federal guidelines still require all individuals to wear masks while on school busses and State guidelines still require all individuals to wear masks while in health offices.

“Beginning Monday, March 7, mask wearing will become optional for all New Bedford Public Schools students and staff. I do highly encourage those unvaccinated individuals with compromised immune systems to continue wearing their masks. These 5-days after we return from February Break will provide us time to address any increase in positive COVID cases and gives us time to transition our health department team to the new testing process. Please know that there will be some students and staff who personally choose to continue wearing a mask. I request that we support one another and understand that some individuals are working through personal situations where COVID has impacted their family members, friends or themselves. Now is a time to be supportive and understanding – let’s please be respectful of those who choose to continue wearing a mask during the school day.”

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## **Massachusetts Cases of Salmonella Linked to Dog Treats**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is advising consumers who have any Dog Gone Dog Treats to dispose of them. There have been three cases of salmonellosis

(infection with the Salmonella bacteria) linked to individuals handling these dog treats. The cases include two adults in their 70s and a child; all are residents of Essex County. One open bag from a customer and several unopened bags purchased last week all tested positive for Salmonella at the State Public Health Laboratory.

Dog Gone Dog Treats are made in Georgetown, include “chicken chips” and beef liver and sweet potato chips, and are sold at Essex County Co-Op in Topsfield, New England Dog Biscuit Company in Salem, Gimme Chews & Moore in Haverhill, and Animal Krackers in Gloucester. These treats are dehydrated and are not fully cooked.

All stores have been ordered to remove any existing product from their shelves and no additional product is currently being made. People get Salmonella if they eat or handle food that has been contaminated with the bacteria and the food has not been properly handled, prepared, or cooked. Salmonella is common in uncooked food products from animals, such as eggs, poultry, and unpasteurized milk. People who get the germs on their hands can infect themselves by eating, smoking, or touching their mouths. They can also spread the germs to anyone or anything they touch, including food.

Most people with an infection will have diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps that can last up to a week; severe disease is possible but uncommon. Although treatment is not always necessary, people who have weakened immune systems, very young children, adults over 65, and those experiencing severe symptoms should talk to their healthcare providers about treatment. Individuals should consult with their healthcare provider if they have symptoms after contact with the dog treats or an animal that has eaten the dog treats.

Dogs that become ill from Salmonella infection may experience diarrhea that can contain blood or mucus, may seem more tired than usual, and may have a fever or vomit. It is also possible



for dogs to have Salmonella infection and not appear sick. Those concerned that their dogs may have become ill after eating the treats should consult their veterinarians.

The best way to prevent Salmonella infection from pet food or treats is to:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water right after handling pet food or treats or having contact with animal feces (stool), especially before preparing, serving, or eating foods or drinks, or before preparing baby bottles.
- Store pet food and treats away from where human food is stored or prepared, and away from young children.
- Children under 5 should not touch or eat pet food or treats.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that the pet treats may have touched. Salmonella can survive several weeks in dry environments.

Don't let your dog lick your mouth and face after eating. If you do, wash your hands and any other parts of your body they may have licked with soap and water.

The CDC does not recommend feeding raw diets to pets as they have been found to contain germs, including Salmonella, that can make pets and humans sick.

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## **New Southcoast Health Pediatric Office in Wareham expands access to care**

Southcoast Health is proud to announce the expansion of our pediatric services in Wareham. The new practice will be located in the Rosebrook Center and will open to patients on Monday, February 14. This is the sixth Southcoast Health

Pediatrics location in the region, part of the organization's commitment to expanding access to care for children and families across the South Coast.

The new office will provide services from two local providers: Katie Collins, DNP, CPNP, and John Leimert, MD, who currently practice in Southcoast Health's Dartmouth location. Both providers will continue to see patients in the Dartmouth office, and they will now also offer services to the residents of Wareham and its surrounding towns at the Rosebrook location.

"Southcoast Health recognized the need for an expanded access to exceptional pediatric care in the region," says Dr. Leimert. "Wareham and its surrounding communities represent a large population on the South Coast and we are proud to grow our practice to better serve our youngest patients and their families in the community."

Southcoast Health Pediatrics accepts patients from infancy to adolescence, offering high-quality specialized care from a team of board-certified pediatricians and certified pediatric nurse practitioners.

"As a resident of the local area for the past 37 years, I have seen firsthand the tremendous growth that our community is experiencing," says Katie Collins, DNP, CPNP. "Expected to have a similar patient volume to our Dartmouth office, the new practice location offers additional convenience for many patients. We are looking forward to offering the excellent pediatric care our community has come to expect in this new location."

Southcoast Health Pediatricians provide a wide range of services including physical exams, vaccinations, lung and heart exams, diabetes management, sports injury treatment, and more to keep children healthy during crucial developmental years.

In addition to pediatric care, and in response to the coronavirus pandemic, Southcoast Health is also offering Pfizer vaccine appointments for children ages 5-11 years old at designated pediatric vaccine clinics every Tuesday, 4 pm – 7 pm, at the Vanity Fair Outlet located at 375 Faunce Corner Road in Dartmouth.

To learn more about the pediatric vaccine clinics please visit COVID-19 Vaccination Information – Southcoast Health and reach out to your child's pediatrician with any questions.

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## **Upcoming New Bedford COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics**

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.

Visit [vaxnb.com](http://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:

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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/>.

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- 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

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/>.

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# **Upcoming COVID-19 testing sites for New Bedford; how to**



# order FREE at home test kits

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](https://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](mailto: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 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and at PAACA on Coggeshall St. on Wednesday.

For rapid tests, the federal government is offering free at-home test kits online, at [COVIDtests.gov](https://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](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test).

Upcoming testing locations in New Bedford include:

## **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.