

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/>