



Town of New Castle, NH
Settled 1623
Incorporated 1693

COVID Update March 12, 2021

There is a lot of good news this week. Our numbers in NH are down, and as more high risk people are vaccinated, more restrictions are being loosened. Please note that the state mask mandate is still in effect.

1. Updated State COVID Guidance From WMUR: Gov. Chris Sununu announced today (Thursday) that travelers from other states will no longer be required to quarantine or produce a negative COVID-19 test. There will still be a recommendation that they quarantine, however. The change only applies to domestic travel, with international travelers still subject to quarantine requirements.

Effective immediately, retail shops can operate at 100% capacity, and restaurants and bars can now host karaoke. Bar games, darts and pool are also now allowed, but there are still some restrictions listed in the state's guidelines. Operators of overnight and day camps also have more flexibility, according to the governor.

One thing hasn't changed. New Hampshire is still under a mask mandate. Sununu said the evidence clearly shows that masks work, and the key to reopening things fully is making sure the COVID-19 numbers continue to decline. A new surge could force a painful reimposing of restrictions, so it's something everyone is trying to avoid.

A key factor in the COVID-19 case numbers is the ongoing vaccination effort. State health officials said 21% of Granite Staters have now received at least one shot of a COVID-19 vaccine, and if the pace of vaccinations continues to pick up, all New Hampshire adults may be eligible for vaccination by May.

Additionally, as of this writing, **President Biden plans to direct states to make all adults eligible for vaccines by May 1.** Officials say Biden plans to deploy an additional 4,000 active-duty troops to support vaccination efforts. He also has announced that he secured an additional 100 million doses of Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 single-shot vaccine, to be delivered by the end of this year.

2. Hospitality Industry COVID Precaution Certification:

To make some less skittish about venturing out responsibly, there is a new State-wide program that is intended to increase public trust in the hospitality industry via training of

front-facing staff. The Community College System of NH (CCSNH) and the NH Lodging & Restaurant Association (NHLRA) have partnered to provide a free online training called the “NH Promise” Program. This training is for employees in NH’s restaurant, food services, and lodging industry to certify that staff are trained in COVID-related safety protocols. It is a voluntary program.

Workers who complete the course will be awarded a certificate from CCSNH and the business can display the logo below:



3. CDC and Medicare and Medicaid Federal agencies relax nursing home visit guidelines.

From Brief 19: The covid-19 pandemic has caused historically high numbers of deaths among adults of all ages. The number of elderly people in the US who have died in the last year well exceeds anything we’ve seen in the modern era. But nursing homes in particular have been the setting for what were at times apocalyptic scenes. While fewer than 1 percent of all US residents live in long-term care facilities, around [34 percent](#) of all covid-19 deaths occurred among this population. Therefore, policies that limited or banned visitors made sense at times.

That said, denying visits between families and loved ones and long-term care facility residents who may not have long to live is about as depressing a policy as one could imagine. That’s why the new “Revised Visitation Recommendations” for nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, published Wednesday, is so welcome.

The document is a collaboration between the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Now that over 3 million coronavirus vaccine doses have been administered in the relevant facilities, the easing of strict policies makes sense. Per the policy, “responsible indoor visitation” should be permitted “at all times and for all residents,” regardless of vaccination status of either the resident or the visitor. Thus, the default position is “yes, visits are allowed,” unless particular problems are noted; the named exceptions to the policy are as follows:

1. For unvaccinated residents, if the positivity rate for SARS-CoV-2 tests within the county where the facility is located is greater than 10 percent *and* less than 70 percent of residents in that facility have yet to have been fully vaccinated.
2. Residents with test-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection (regardless of vaccination status) until they have met the usual criteria for ceasing of precautions for infected persons.



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3. Residents in quarantine (regardless of vaccination status) until the usual quarantine period/criteria have been met.

In fact, these rules are even more aggressive than they initially appear. That's because the caveats listed above apply to "regular" nursing home residents only. The guidance goes even further for residents who are gravely ill and at risk of imminent death or a change in their overall health. For those residents, even the above restrictions should not apply.

These new policies reflect the reality that herd immunity in nursing homes, at least, may be in sight. If so, nursing homes have gone from becoming the most dangerous epicenter of this crisis, to among the safest locales. That's what vaccine rollouts can achieve.

4. A note of Caution: About 1 in 10 Americans -- more than 32 million people -- are now fully vaccinated against Covid-19, but experts say that number is nowhere near high enough to suppress the spread through herd immunity. CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky says March and April will be "pivotal times" for whether people can work toward ending the pandemic nightmare or will erase progress by ignoring safety measures.

5. In Case you missed it, Updated CDC Guidance For Vaccinated People:

New guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can safely visit with other vaccinated people and small groups of unvaccinated people in some circumstances, but there are still important safety precautions needed.

The guidelines were announced at the White House COVID-19 Response Team briefing Monday.

The CDC defines people who are fully vaccinated as those who are two weeks past their second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine or two weeks past a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

People who are vaccinated are protected, and there is growing evidence that they don't spread COVID-19, but scientists are still trying to understand how long vaccine protection lasts.

"The level of precautions taken should be determined by the characteristics of the unvaccinated people, who remain unprotected against COVID-19," the guidelines said.

The CDC says fully vaccinated people can:

- Visit other vaccinated people indoors without masks or physical distancing.
- Visit indoors with unvaccinated people from a single household without masks or physical distancing, if the unvaccinated people are at low risk for severe disease.

- Skip quarantine and testing if exposed to someone who has COVID-19 but are asymptomatic, but should monitor for symptoms for 14 days.

However, people who are fully vaccinated still need to take precautions in many scenarios.

In addition, fully vaccinated people should continue basic safety precautions, including: wearing a mask that fits well and keeping physical distance in public; avoiding medium- and large-sized crowds; avoiding poorly ventilated public spaces; washing hands frequently; and getting tested for COVID-19 if they feel sick.

If fully vaccinated people live in a non-health care congregate setting, such as a group home detention facility, they should quarantine for 14 days and get tested if exposed to someone with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case.

The guidelines say that the risk of infection in social activities like going to the gym or restaurant is lower for the fully vaccinated, however, people should still take precautions as transmission risk in these settings is higher and increases the more unvaccinated there are there.

The CDC travel recommendations have not changed for the vaccinated. The guidelines still say that with high case numbers, the CDC recommends that you do not travel at this time.

Guidance will likely change in 6 weeks or so, once all of the high risk people have been vaccinated. Stay tuned....

Yours In Health,

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