



Town of New Castle, NH
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COVID Update April 9, 2021

And another week passes in this pandemic. Here is the news of the week, and I will try to keep it short.

1. All NH residents ages 16 and older are eligible to register for the COVID vaccine. Additionally, anyone age 16 or older, regardless of residency, will be able to schedule an appointment through VINI starting April 19. **Please go to <https://www.vaccines.nh.gov/> or phone 211 to register.**

2. The UK variant, which is more infectious/transmissible and more deadly is not the dominant strain in the US and cases are on the rise in the US, NH, and locally.

Our state epidemiologist Dr. Chan released a statement Wednesday noting that the virus is spreading in all age groups under the age of 60 in New Hampshire. The spread is most pronounced in Hillsborough, Rockingham and Strafford counties. New infections are up about 60% since the beginning of March.

He said the increased community spread is likely being caused by people relaxing restrictions too quickly. New variants that spread more easily, notably the B.1.1.7 variant, known as the UK variant, may also be increasing the current spread of the virus.

The message from Dr. Chan is that until the pandemic is over, people should wear masks, practice social distancing, avoid crowds and large group gatherings and get vaccinated as soon as possible.

3. More vaccine related news:

Per the New York Times: Many organizations and businesses see vaccine passports as a way to keep employees, customers and others safe and are pushing forward. A number of universities have already said they will require proof of vaccination from students this fall, and airlines are trying out apps showing the vaccination status of pilots and crews.

In the U.S., the Supreme Court has declared, in two separate cases, that government entities can largely require vaccinations for entry, service and travel. Private companies can also largely refuse to employ or do business with anyone they want, although states can probably override

that by enacting a law barring discrimination based on vaccination status.

4. New Guidance for contaminated surfaces:

The CDC has clarified the risk of surface transmission of COVID-19 is low. The virus spreads almost entirely through the air.

For further detail: The CDC states, “The principal mode by which people are infected with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is through exposure to respiratory droplets carrying infectious virus. It is possible for people to be infected through contact with contaminated surfaces or objects (fomites), but the risk is generally considered to be low.”

Additionally, the CDC reports the following findings based on recent studies:

- **Transmission:** Studies suggest that the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection via the fomite transmission route is low, and generally less than 1 in 10,000.
- **Surface Survival:** On porous surfaces, studies report inability to detect viable virus within minutes to hours; on non-porous surfaces, viable virus can be detected for days to weeks. When accounting for both surface survival data and real-world transmission factors, the risk of fomite transmission after a person with COVID-19 has been in an indoor space is minor after 3 days (72 hours).
- **Effectiveness of Cleaning and Disinfection:** Routine cleaning performed effectively with soap or detergent, at least once per day, can substantially reduce virus levels on surfaces. Disinfection is recommended in indoor community settings where there has been a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 within the last 24 hours.

5. European Union regulators found that the Astra Zenica likely causes a very small increase in the risk of blood clots in people who receive the vaccine. It is not approved in the US as of this date.

6. Moderna mRNA vaccine shows durable antibody response six months later (Pfizer shows this as well). For further detail:

Early in the pandemic, some people were concerned that the antibodies generated in response to natural coronavirus infection would fade rapidly, raising the specter of a never-ending crisis in which repeat infections were common. Mostly, these fears came out of reports stemming from antibody tests that we now know were not adequately vetted. While repeat infections have been reported widely, they remain rare occurrences. But what about antibodies our bodies make in response to vaccination?

Now, months removed from the initial dissemination of the two approved mRNA vaccines (from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna) and the groundbreaking clinical trials for each, new data suggest that the Moderna vaccine provides persistent immunity at least six months after inoculation. A research letter, which was published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* Wednesday showed significant evidence for the durability of neutralizing antibodies elicited by the vaccine.

Blood taken from a group of 33 individuals enrolled in Moderna’s clinical trials were evaluated 180 days after receiving their second dose and tested for antibody activity against SARS-CoV-2.



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In all age groups, antibody levels were orders of magnitude above the detectable limit six months out, and the blood taken from the vaccine recipients was also able to neutralize live virus at that time as well. It does appear, however, that antibody activity was slightly lower for individuals over 56 years of age.

The takeaway here that we know the Moderna covid-19 mRNA vaccine maintains efficacy six months after the second dose. Research is ongoing about just how long that immunity will last, whether any of the newer variants muddy this picture, and whether or not we will eventually require a booster shot at some point down the road.

Yours in Health,

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