



Town of New Castle, NH
Settled 1623
Incorporated 1693

COVID19 Update December 23, 2020

This week I veer from pithy scientific data. This holiday season is unlike others we have had. With COVID19 everyone has had to modify his or her daily life. From illness, death, to masking, to changes in working, to shopping, to socializing (or lack thereof), to the lack of physical touch, and other countless parts of our lives, this global pandemic has impacted each of us. For some it is an annoyance, for some it has less of an impact, but to others it is catastrophic. Whatever our experience, it is shared, and we are part of a community. One that has found not only loss, but also gifts within it. As I share some of the news of the week, it is my fervent hope that you all are able to find gifts within this pandemic- no matter how simple. I also hope that you can hold out and follow CDC and state guidance while we are in a very dangerous phase of the pandemic.

1. The good news is that a second vaccine made by Moderna received emergency use authorization from the FDA and is being distributed as of this writing. New Hampshire will receive 24,200 doses of the Moderna vaccine in several batches during this week (and another 9000 of the Pfizer vaccine for a total of 33,000 doses). It is also an mRNA (messenger RNA) vaccine that **CANNOT cause COVID**. This is another significant step towards normalizing our lives. We need herd immunity (from a combination of people immune from infection via vaccination and/or previous infection with a persistent immune response) in order to decrease the infection rate nationally and internationally, for more parts of our lives open up and normalize. Herd immunity is reached when 75-85% of people are immune. Until this happens, our society cannot normalize. Thus, when your turn comes, please choose to be vaccinated. And yes, you should receive the vaccine even if you have had COVID, as we do not know how long or persistent our immune response is to it.

Individuals being vaccinated currently are still in group 1a- frontline healthcare workers and long term care facilities.

A little more on the Moderna vaccine:

How many doses of the Moderna vaccine will be available and when will they be available?

Of the first 100 million doses purchased by the U.S. government, 6 million will be delivered this coming week, and approximately 20 million total doses will be delivered by the end of December 2020. The balance of approximately 80 million doses will be delivered in the first quarter of 2021. The US government purchased an additional 100 million doses last week. This new order of 100 million doses will be delivered in the second quarter of 2021

The supply of Moderna's vaccine is greater than Pfizer's so more people can be vaccinated sooner.

What do we know about allergic reactions to the Moderna vaccine?

Moderna reported that they did not see anaphylactic reactions to the vaccine in their studies.

What is the FDA recommendation regarding allergies for Moderna?

The FDA has labeled the Moderna vaccine the same as Pfizer's. The FDA has indicated that anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to the first dose, shouldn't receive the second dose of the vaccine. The FDA has also indicated that sites giving the vaccine should have epinephrine and other supportive measures for treating any potential allergic reactions. Therefore people who have more common allergies, eg. nuts, shellfish, cats/dogs, can receive the vaccine.

Studies have shown thus far that pregnant women who develop COVID do not pass the virus to their unborn children. It has not been shown to cross the placenta. (JAMA Network Open, 12/22/2020).

Studies are underway for immunizing children. Currently there is not an option for immunizing those under age 16.

2. There is a new strain of COVID 19 in originally seen in England in September 2020 that is in a number of other countries. This strain has made the news and disrupted travel to and from some nations. There are many, many strains of COVID 19. It is normal for this virus to evolve and mutate (change). Currently available information indicates it is up to 70% more contagious/more catchy (meaning much easier to spread). The good news is that it is not thought to be resistant to the vaccines that have been and are being developed, or more lethal/cause more severe disease. It is continuing to be studied.

3. Our numbers and what they mean. Current COVID 19 infection rates are at near record highs and hospitalizations are at record highs. In a press briefing yesterday, state epidemiologist Dr. Benjamin Chan said the state's test positivity rate has been stable at a 9.1% average over the past seven days. There were 624 new cases reported Tuesday, and the number of current hospitalizations is at a record 297.

There have been more than 18.1 million coronavirus cases in the United States, according to the [Johns Hopkins University tally](#). The U.S. death toll has surpassed 321,600 people, according to Johns Hopkins.

To put this into perspective: JAMA December 17, 2020-‘The current exponential increase in COVID-19 is reaching a calamitous scale in the United States, potentially overwhelming the health care system and causing substantial loss of life. The news media dutifully report each day's increase in new cases and deaths, but putting these numbers in perspective may be difficult. The daily US mortality rate for COVID-19 deaths is equivalent to the September 11, 2001, attacks, which claimed 2988 lives,¹ occurring every 1.5 days, or 15 Airbus 320 jetliners,² each carrying 150 passengers, crashing every day.’

Health officials are urging people to avoid travel and gatherings, especially over the holidays, as COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths continue to surge. The state is recommending people to neither travel even within New England, nor gather with anyone who does not live in their immediate households over the holidays to help prevent increasing infections, death, and overwhelming our healthcare system.



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3) Links for more information:

Updated childcare guidance:

<https://www.covidguidance.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt381/files/inline-documents/2020-05/guidance-child-care.pdf>

Link for Vaccine Group 1A

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/phase-1a-technical-assistance.pdf>

If you wish to volunteer for the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine trial, you may phone 603-319-8863, or go to <https://activmedresearch.com/>

Links to research studies:

<https://www.nih.gov/coronavirus>

https://www.covidvaccinestudy.com/?utm_source=ct&utm_medium=ct&utm_campaign=ct&mp_t=ct&StudyID=C4591001

Updated FAQ from the State of New Hampshire regarding COVID:

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/covid-19-faq.pdf>

COVID dashboard website- for daily positivity rate, school infections, graphics, etc.

<https://www.nh.gov/covid19/dashboard/overview.htm>

COVID numbers update by town:

https://www.wmur.com/article/new-hampshire-town-by-town-covid-cases/34879297?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Coronavirus%20Newsletter%202020-12-10&utm_term=wmur-coronavirus_COMBINED

The FDA has issued emergency authorization for the [first at-home coronavirus test](#). It is called the Ellume COVID 19 Home Test.

CDC guidance for holiday celebrations:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>

My message to you, my beloved community, is simple. Please be mindful of your choices and actions and how they might impact your family, friends, neighbors, and general community. It literally can mean the difference between life and death for someone.

I wish you peace, joy, patience, and health in this season.

Yours in Health,

Kathy Hollister, MD

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