

## COVID-19 and Mental Health

Maintaining one's mental health is an essential part of achieving overall well-being. The link below provides resources that will be helpful in connecting individuals with people who can benefit from talking about how they are feeling. There is also information about the virtual support groups and hotlines that are available through various organizations. <https://www.nj211.org/covid-19-and-mental-health>

### **NEW!! – 988 Suicide and Crisis Line Number Now Available**

New Jerseyans are now able to use **988** to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. **988** will be available for call, text, or chat to those experiencing a mental health-related or suicidal crisis, or those looking to help a loved one through a crisis. **The existing Lifeline number, 1-800-273-8255, will continue to be available.**

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available to persons of all abilities, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). The Division of Developmental Disabilities, and other governmental Departments, have worked with **988** to provide disability specific service information and other available resources. This will equip **988** to meet the presenting need of the caller and, as appropriate, connect them with other appropriate resources depending on their unique needs.

Providers rendering services to persons with IDD and/or TBI are reminded that **988 is distinct from 911**. Under [Danielle's Law P.L. 2003, c.191](#), **911 must continue to be called in any situation where a prudent person could reasonably believe a life threatening emergency exists**. More information on Danielle's Law can be found [here](#).

For more information about 988, please visit the [Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline website](#). Additionally, a helpful *Frequently Asked Questions* document for persons with IDD can be found [here](#).

## COVID-19 Activity

For the latest Statewide COVID Activity Report that specifies the Risk Levels by County (usually updated by the State each Friday), please click the following link:

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently updated its guidelines to track COVID-19 risk in communities. Instead of focusing on preventing transmission of the virus, the CDC guidelines aim to minimize severe illness and prevent health care systems from becoming overwhelmed. Taking actions proportionately to any increases seen in severe illness and implementing a different set of actions similar to those taken with seasonal influenza is likely as we move into the endemic COVID phase.

- The latest COVID outbreak in the U.S. involves **mostly Omicron strain XBB.1.5**. It is now the dominant strain in the Northeastern U.S. It is responsible for an estimated 75% of new cases in the CDC's regions 1 and 2, which include Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- The new **XBB.1.5** subvariant, first isolated in October of 2022, **is the most transmissible yet**. It is rapidly replacing other variants in the U.S. and in parts of Europe. So far, it's been identified in more than 25 countries. There is no evidence that the new strain will cause illness worse than other Omicron variants. Risk assessments by the CDC and World Health Organization are expected to be released in the coming days.
- **XBB.1.5** has an enhanced ability to more **easily evade immunity from vaccination or prior infection** as do most of the other Omicron subvariants. Most within the U.S. population have now acquired some meaningful level of immunity from either past infection or vaccination. This contributes to the more

mild nature of symptoms seen in those infected with Omicron subvariants. It is expected that prior infection and vaccination will also prevent those infected with **Omicron XBB.1.5** from severe illness, hospitalization and death, at similar levels. Prior infection and vaccination only has minimal protection from preventing infection from Omicron subvariants including **XBB.1.5**.

- **Omicron subvariants BF.7 and BA.5.2 are sweeping across China causing a massive outbreak with global implications.** It is possible that China's population may have a weaker immune response because of the incredibly restrictive measures imposed on the population which drastically reduced earlier exposure to Omicron and its subvariants. Vaccination rates may also be lagging. The reporting of case rates, deaths and vaccination rates coming from China may not be reliable.
- It is important to emphasize that **previous infection and vaccination are still highly protective against severe illness, hospitalization, and death.**

Please see the **links below for the NJDOH COVID Activity Dashboard, the NJ County COVID Activity Reports and the links to the Morris and Passaic County Health Department COVID Websites.**

NJDOH Dashboard:

[https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019\\_dashboard.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_dashboard.shtml)

Statewide and Regional COVID Activity Report and Risk Level by County:

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>

Morris County-Based COVID Information including Data for Total Positive Cases by Municipality and COVID Testing Availability:

<https://health.morriscountynj.gov/coronavirus/>

Passaic County-Based COVID Information including Testing Availability:

<https://www.passaiccountynj.org/departments/health/covid-19>

## **Use of Masks and Other Important Safety Precautions**

### **Masks**

Please see the link below to the CDC recommendation for the use of masks indoor for both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals especially when County transmission is **substantial or high**.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

### **Other Important Precautions to Consider to Protect against Influenza, RSV, and COVID-19:**

- Get vaccinated! (Flu and COVID)
- Get boosted! (Flu and COVID)
- Distance six or more feet when possible
- Wear masks/face coverings when appropriate, as recommend by the CDC in the link above
- Keep indoor spaces well ventilated to the greatest extent possible
- Practice hand hygiene
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth
- Disinfect commonly touched surfaces
- Stay home when symptomatic
- Get tested when appropriate and recommended
- Follow all of the requirements and advisories set forth in the Executive Orders, Executive Directives and Travel Advisories that might be in effect.
- Adhere to isolation and quarantine recommendations
- Strengthen the immune system by:

- Getting good nutrition with a healthy diet. Consult your healthcare provider about supplementing with Vitamin D, Vitamin C, and zinc
- Getting enough sleep
- Exercising. Consult your physician about what regimen is best for you.
- Maintaining mental health and managing stress. Learn to recognize those times when you may need to employ destressing techniques or seek support.
- Keeping on schedule with healthcare visits

**No** vaccines are 100% effective. People must balance preventive actions to reduce possible transmission and maintain safety. People who have a weakened immune system should especially consider practicing precautions during this winter season because of the extremely elevated prevalence of influenza, RSV and COVID. The combination of vaccination against influenza and COVID-19 and [continued precautions to protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection.

## **COVID-19 Testing Options**

### ➤ **For All New Jersey Residents**

No-Cost COVID Testing is Available

For more information, click on the following link: [Find a list of free, public testing sites, including pop-up testing sites.](#)

### ➤ **Morris County**

For more information, please see the Morris County website at <https://www.morriscountynj.gov/Residents/Health/Coronavirus/Get-a-Covid-19-Test>

### ➤ **Passaic County**

Passaic County offers At-home and Mobile COVID-19 PCR testing at no cost to people who want to be tested. Details may be found at <https://www.passaiccountynj.org/departments/health/covid-19>

### ➤ **Atlantic Health System**

As COVID-19 and the Omicron variant continue to impact our community, Atlantic Health System has increased their testing capacity.

If you suspect you've been exposed to COVID-19 or are experiencing mild to moderate symptoms, please consider one of Atlantic Health System's dedicated testing locations or other community testing sites listed on the following link: <https://www.atlantichealth.org/conditions-treatments/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-testing.html>.

Choosing between a COVID-19 PCR or antigen test can be confusing. Atlantic Health has created the attached graphic to help you choose the right test option for you and your family. COVID-19 testing is available for patients with or without symptoms at specific Atlantic Health locations. Find a community lab, testing center or urgent care testing location near you: <https://bit.ly/3uQ9HEI>

### ➤ **Additional Local Testing Site (not listed on the NJDOH website)**

Doctor's Urgent Care

Pompton Plains, NJ

<https://www.njdoctorsurgentcare.com/>

## **COVID-19 Vaccination**

For Updated COVID-19 Vaccination and Booster Information, please click on the following links:

NJDOH

<https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/vaccine>

Atlantic Health System

[bit.ly/3qC2rfN](https://bit.ly/3qC2rfN)

There are Multiple Ways to Get Vaccinated and Boosted. Appointment Based or Walk-up clinics are Now Easily Accessible. For up-to-date vaccine locations in New Jersey, please visit [covid19.nj.gov/finder](https://covid19.nj.gov/finder).

## **Definition of Close Contact to a COVID Positive Individual**

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) has established criteria for what constitutes a “Close Contact” to someone who is a COVID-19 positive individual. It is defined as – **“a total of 15 minutes or more of close contact exposure (6 feet or closer) to an infected person during a 24-hour period”**. Those who have been determined to be a close contact to a COVID -19 positive individual should quarantine for a minimum period as recommended by the NJDOH/CDC. In **classroom settings in K through 12 schools**, criteria for what constitutes a “Close Contact” , guidance is available on the COVID-19 Information for Schools website at [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019\\_schools.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_schools.shtml)

## **Quarantine and Isolation Recommendations of the NJDOH**

For those who’ve tested positive (Isolation) or those who’ve been exposed to someone who tested COVID positive (Quarantine) please see the following NJDOH links:

[https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/isolation\\_quarantine\\_nonhealthcare.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/isolation_quarantine_nonhealthcare.pdf)

[https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019\\_community.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_community.shtml)

## **Travel**

While the NJDOH has lifted its travel advisory, CDC travel guidelines are still recommended for domestic and international travel. For more CDC/NJDOH Travel Information and guidance, please follow the links below:

NJDOH

<https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/travel-and-transportation/are-there-travel-restrictions-to-or-from-new-jersey>

CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>

## **K thru 12 Schools, Childcare and Youth Camp Operations**

K thru 12 schools, childcare facilities and youth camps have specific guidance unique to these institutions. The new Guidance for K-12, Childcare and Youth Camps may be found at the following link:

## [COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for K-12 Schools, Childcare and Youth Camps](#)

### **Monkeypox**

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with monkeypox virus. It can infect anyone, but it does not spread easily to people without close contact. The virus can cause flu-like symptoms, swollen lymph nodes, and a rash that often begins on the face and spreads to other parts of the body. Please click the following link for important information about the disease, its prevalence, treatment options that may be available and vaccination opportunities: <https://www.nj.gov/health/monkeypox/>

NJDOH is working in conjunction with CDC and local health departments, to quickly identify monkeypox cases and close contacts, provide treatment and vaccine, and further prevent the spread of disease. CDC is working with state and local health officials to monitor probable and confirmed cases within the country. Report confirmed or suspect cases immediately to the [Local Health Department](#).

### **US Response to the Ebola Outbreak in Uganda**

Beginning on October 6, the United States began redirecting travelers from Uganda to five U.S. airports to screen them for the Ebola virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will conduct a temperature check and risk assessment on anyone who has been in Uganda over the previous 21 days, the incubation time of the deadly Ebola virus. State and local public health officials will continue symptom monitoring and follow up for 21 days after their arrival.

The airports are: JFK International Airport in New York, Washington Dulles International Airport, Newark Liberty International Airport, Chicago O'Hare International Airport and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

For more information on the outbreak and the US response please see the link below.

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/s1018-ebola-outbreaks-uganda.html#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20has%20not%20restricted,within%20the%20last%2021%20days.>

### **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Outbreaks**

Respiratory syncytial (sin-sish-uhl) virus, or RSV, is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious, especially for infants and older adults. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung) and pneumonia (infection of the lungs) in children younger than one year of age in the United States. People infected with RSV usually show symptoms within 4 to 6 days after getting infected. Symptoms of RSV infection usually include

- Runny nose
- Decrease in appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing

These symptoms usually appear in stages and not all at once. In very young infants, the only symptoms of RSV, may be irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties. Almost all children will have had an RSV infection by their second birthday.

For up to date information on the outbreak, please click the following link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/surveillance/nrevss/rsv/state.html#NJ>

## **Influenza**

According to the CDC, getting a flu vaccine is an essential part of protecting your health and the health of your loved ones. Flu season is upon us. It began in October and will continue into early spring (peaking in January and February). All residents are encouraged to be aware and to take precautionary and preventative measures. That includes getting your flu vaccine.

Please see the following link about influenza and the precautionary and preventative measures that will be helpful in reducing the spread of the disease.

<https://www.nj211.org/get-flu-ready>

## **Executive Orders and Executive Directives**

*Please note, Executive Orders or Executive Directives may be issued by the Governor or the Commissioner of Health at any time to establish or relax restrictions on certain businesses, institutions, social activities and gatherings. For up to date and more complete information, **please refer to the entire contents of the Executive Orders and Executive Directives** listed at the links below.*

Please see the link below for all **Executive Orders** to date:

[https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo\\_archive.shtml](https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.shtml)

Please see the link below for an up to date list of **Executive Directives** of the NJDOH:

<https://www.state.nj.us/health/legal/covid19/>