



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Town of Westwood

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
BOARD OF HEALTH

Jared Orsini, R.E.H.S./R.S. Health Director
Ivan Kwagala, Food Inspector/Sanitarian
Lorraine Donovan, Administrative Assistant
Margaret Sullivan, R.N., B.S.N., Public Health Nurse

Shelley Reeve, R.N., B.S.N., J.D.
Carol Ahearn, R.N., B.S.N.
Roger L. Christian, M.D., Chairperson

January 4, 2022

Dear Westwood Residents,

On behalf of the Board of Health, I would like to wish you all a happy and healthy 2022! I am writing today to share with you Westwood's December COVID-19 positive case count, the Omicron variant, new CDC guidelines for isolation and quarantine, the need to return to using face coverings and social distancing in all indoor public spaces, and COVID-19 tests (PCR and at home tests).

First, Westwood recorded 440 positive COVID-19 cases in the December of 2021. This is by far the largest monthly total since the beginning of the pandemic. We are expecting high case counts to continue for a few more weeks as we deal with the Omicron variant. The good news is many of these cases of the Omicron variant are being reported as less severe than previous variants. The bad news is that many more infections increase the statistical odds of serious illness due to the number of those being infected. We need to continue to take this virus seriously as it is still a significant illness for many.

Limiting exposure to COVID-19 infection while at work, school, shopping, dining out, and socializing is still a priority for our community. Please remember to take the necessary steps to limit infections in these environments. Wearing a properly fitting high quality face covering in all indoor public spaces is the most consistent recommendation health experts have and continue to make. Face coverings are strongly encouraged to be used. Social distancing and avoiding large crowds is important too. The Omicron variant is being reported as very highly transmissible. We recommend keeping all interactions in public as brief as possible as well as maintaining as much distance between you and others as the space allows.

The MA Dept. of Public Health (MDPH) has adopted the CDC's latest timeline for isolation and quarantine. It shortens the amount of time one must isolate with COVID-19 down to 5 days, with an additional 5 days of mask use outside of the home. It is important to note, that fully vaccinated individuals who have NOT received their booster shot are expected to quarantine if one was a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. If you are eligible to receive the booster shot, we strongly encourage you to do so. For a full review of the new guideline please visit; <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/isolation-and-quarantine-guidance-for-the-general-public>

Lastly, with the increased demand, and currently limited supply of at home COVID-19 antigen tests, it has been increasingly challenging to purchase one as well as obtain a PCR test. It has been reported that at home tests may not provide the same level of accuracy as a PCR test and should be used with that understanding. When possible it is encouraged to schedule a PCR test, however, we know that for many, who are sick or are planning a social outing, an at home test may be your best time sensitive option. The Town is looking into options to provide residents with some additional options and more information will be coming out over the next several days.

Please continue to visit the Town's website, www.townhall.westwood.ma.us, and follow us on social media.

Stay Well,
Jared Orsini REHS/RS
Health Director