



Northeast District Department of Health

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PRESS RELEASE

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Health Department Reports Increase in COVID-19 Cases

NDDH Notes Recent Cases Among 16 to 19-Year-Olds

BROOKLYN - According to data from the CT Department of Public Health, 20 northeast Connecticut residents age 16-19 years tested positive for COVID-19 between July 23 and July 31, 2020. The Northeast District Department of Health (NDDH) reports that eight of the cases were from the town of Woodstock; four from Brooklyn; three from Pomfret; two from both Eastford and Plainfield; and one from Canterbury. Only 13 cases were reported in this age-group in the previous four months. NDDH began receiving reports of these cases on July 23. Nineteen of the cases were reported to NDDH on or after July 26th.

“In addition to laboratory test results, we are collecting information from those who have been infected, their family members, and representatives from health care and the local school systems as part of our investigation,” said NDDH Director of Health Sue Starkey. “The State has been allowing businesses to open and social gatherings to take place, but everyone is still supposed to follow the Rules by wearing their masks and keeping their distance from others. Every day, we hear reports from around the country and the State that young people are taking risks by gathering together without carefully following the Rules. It’s unfortunate, but it was predictable for it to eventually happen here in northeast CT.”

NDDH is actively conducting case investigations to identify sources of infection as well as potential contacts.

“We urge you to answer the phone when we call,” stated Linda Colangelo, NDDH Education and Communications Coordinator. “These investigations are helping us to target our prevention efforts and give people an early warning that they may be at risk. These calls are intended to save lives.”

Cases are instructed to complete a period of isolation to avoid infecting others—including family members. NDDH also conducts contact tracing to identify and speak with those who might have been exposed to those who test positive. Contacts are instructed to quarantine for 14 days. Quarantining requires separation from others while monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19.

The increase in cases in northeast CT among young people comes at a critical time as school officials are trying to make determinations about how and when to reopen schools.

“This has obvious implications for school reopening,” said Starkey. “The nation has been told that students are less likely to be infected and less likely to infect others. Clearly, young people can spread COVID-19 very quickly. We will be watching very closely to see if infections continue to spread among this age group and their contacts—including their extended families.”

Anyone under quarantine who develops symptoms is presumed to have COVID-19 and should seek guidance from their health care provider. Anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 must isolate from others for a minimum of 10 days, and isolation must continue until symptoms are resolving and the individual is fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines.

“One of the most important things you can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to monitor everyone in your house for symptoms which may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus,” Starkey advised. “It is also important to start tracking your health now. Do you have allergy symptoms that could be mistaken for COVID-19? Are you tired every day? Are you taking certain medications that produce COVID-19-like side effects? What is your typical temperature? Knowing your baseline health will help you to recognize *new* symptoms that might be COVID-19. This information will help you and your health care provider make more accurate determinations about your risk.”

Symptoms include fever or chills; cough; shortness of breath or difficulty breathing; fatigue; muscle or body aches; headache; new loss of taste or smell; sore throat; congestion or runny nose; nausea or vomiting; and diarrhea.

To reduce risk and prevent a resurgence of COVID-19, everyone is reminded to do the following:

- When in public, wear a cloth face covering over your nose and mouth.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from other people.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue; throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
- Stay home when you are sick except to get medical care.
- Get your annual flu shot when it becomes available.
- People 65 and over and those of any age with underlying medical conditions should stay safe and stay home.
- Distance yourself from any places or situations where people are not following the Rules or you do not feel safe from COVID-19.

“Achieving and maintaining low rates of transmission isn’t some kind of light-hearted community challenge,” said Colangelo. “It’s about saving lives...and today, it could be yours or someone you love. Please comply with all recommended guidance and directives.”

As of July 31, there have been 374 cases reported in the district; 119 were among those living or working in institutional settings including correctional facilities and nursing homes. Excluding cases associated with institutional settings, there were 8 cases reported in the district in March; 119 in April; 65 in May; 28 in June and 35 in July.

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