

Newton Public Schools

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January 21, 2021

Newton Public Schools Community:

The Newton Public Schools will restart hybrid and in-person instructional options on Monday January 25, 2021. The community health outlook is improving from last week's "severe outbreak" status. While case rates remain very high, they have begun to decrease as expected after the holiday surge. Similar reductions are being seen in the county's infection rate, positive test rate, and COVID hospitalizations. For a closer look at the most recent health data, please go to the charts at the end of this announcement.

Our schools will be sending more information to families to ease the transition for those who are returning to hybrid and in-person instruction. Please keep in mind that students are to return to their schedules as of November 20, 2020. Any desired changes must be communicated by parents in writing to the school administration and will be considered as outlined in the Restart and Recovery Plan.

While we are opening our full range of instructional options, this is no time to let our guard down. Our schools will be hyper-vigilant in enforcing our health and safety standards. In order to maintain hybrid and in-person instruction, we need the full cooperation of our families. **If your child is sick, you must keep him/her home and report the situation to the school nurse using the absence form.** Adherence to health department guidelines and clear communication between home and school are essential to keeping us all safe, so that we do not have to return to fully remote instruction for any of our schools.

Toward that end, we ask you to please review the following key health and safety standards with your family members. The numbered items come directly from our district Restart and Recovery Plan.

- 2.1.1. Staff and students should stay home when they are sick.
- 2.1.2. Staff and students must stay home if they have tested positive for, or are showing, COVID-19 symptoms.
- 2.2.6. If a child has a temperature of 100.0 Fahrenheit or greater, s/he must remain out of school for a minimum of seventy-two (72) hours (three days), but will be able to participate in remote instruction.
- 2.3.1. Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds.
- 2.4.1. Social or physical distancing means staying at least six (6) feet (about two arms' lengths) from other people.
- 2.5.1. Staff, students, and visitors are required to wear cloth face coverings indoors, and in outdoor public spaces when social distancing is not possible, unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or the individual is under two (2) years of age.
- 2.5.2. Cloth face coverings are the responsibility of the wearer and must:
 - 2.5.2.1. Fully cover the nose and mouth and be secured under the chin;
 - 2.5.2.2. Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face; and

2.5.2.3. Be secured with ties or ear loops.

2.5.3. Parents are strongly encouraged to check the cloth face coverings their students are wearing before they attend school and assure they meet the standards above.

3.3.1. Parents are strongly encouraged to take your child's temperature prior to sending her/him to school. If the child's temperature is 100.0 Fahrenheit or greater, your child cannot attend school in person that day. Remote instruction may be provided, if the student is able to participate.

3.3.2. Daily health screenings will be conducted upon entry into the school through temperature reading and symptom checking of staff and students.

3.7.1. Encourage staff, students, and families to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media, if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.

3.7.2. Promote eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind among staff, students, and families.

3.7.3. Encourage staff, students, and families to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.

3.7.4. If you, or someone you care about, is feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or if you are concerned about harming yourself or others, call 911 or the SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 (TTY 1-800-846-8517).

3.7.5. If you, or someone you care about, is experiencing domestic violence or is affected by abuse and needs support, call 911 or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 (TTY 1-800-787-3224).

5.1. Staff members and students should not come to school if they are sick.

5.2. Staff members and students should notify the school nurse if they become sick with COVID-19 symptoms, test positive for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case.

5.4. Students and staff who exhibit symptoms related to COVID-19 while in school must be safely and respectfully isolated from others in an identified isolation room separate from the nurse's office. Students are to remain with continued supervision and care (e.g., regular monitoring of symptoms) until picked up by an authorized adult.

5.7. If the school district becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, officials must immediately notify local health officials to discuss notification of staff and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.

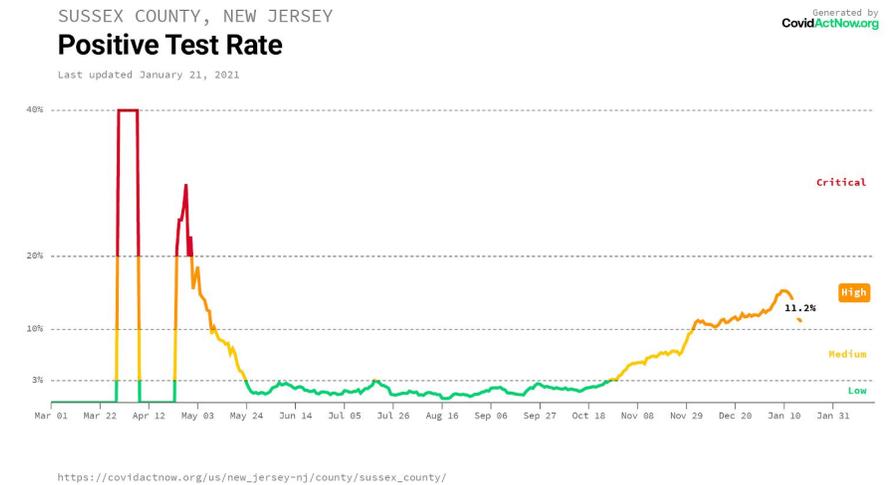
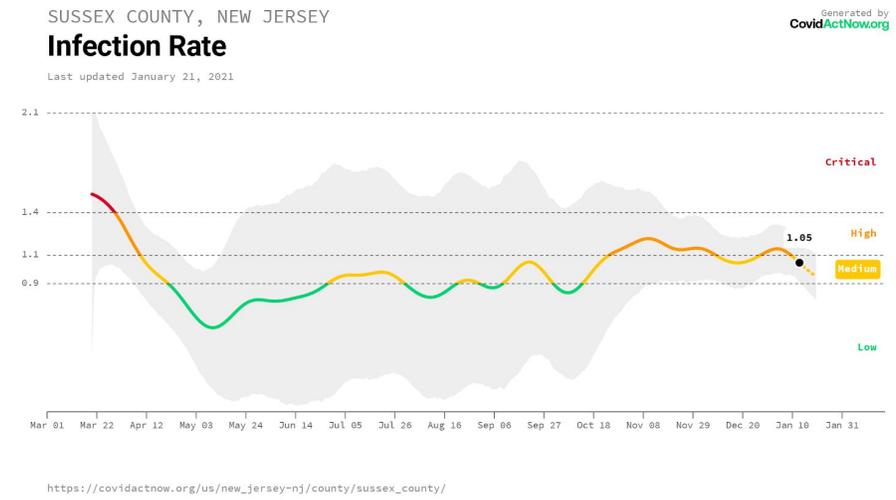
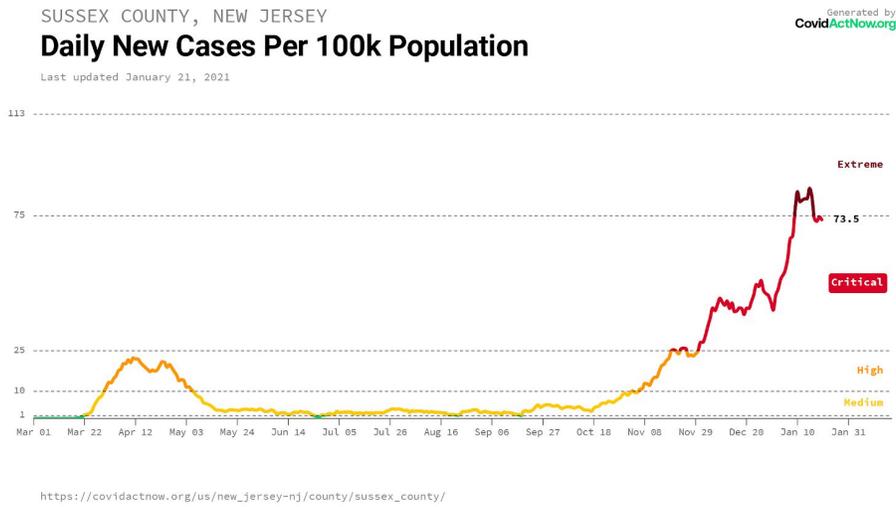
5.8. Sick staff members or students should not return until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation.

6.3. Student social, emotional, and mental health will be a priority, especially during the transition back. Students need to feel connected before academics take center stage.

It is also important to remember the following:

- Students and staff should stay home if anyone in the household is being tested for COVID-19 due to illness until a negative test result is received.
- At this time we must treat symptomatic students and staff as "suspected cases". Close contacts of suspected cases, including siblings, need to quarantine for 14 days or until the suspected case receives a negative test result. There is no option for a doctor's note with alternate diagnosis: either the symptomatic person gets a negative COVID-19 test, or remains out for 10 days from symptom onset. If the suspected case chooses not to get a COVID-19 test, then their close contacts will have to complete the 14 day quarantine.
- For school settings, NJDOH recommends that students with the following symptoms be promptly isolated from others and excluded from school:
 - At least two of the following symptoms: fever (measure or subjective), chills, rigors (shivers), myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion, runny nose or;
 - At least one of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, new taste disorder.
- If you have traveled outside of the immediate region (New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Delaware), you should quarantine for 10 days before returning to school.

Community Health Update - Information is updated daily at covidactnow.org. Sussex County appears headed in the right direction.

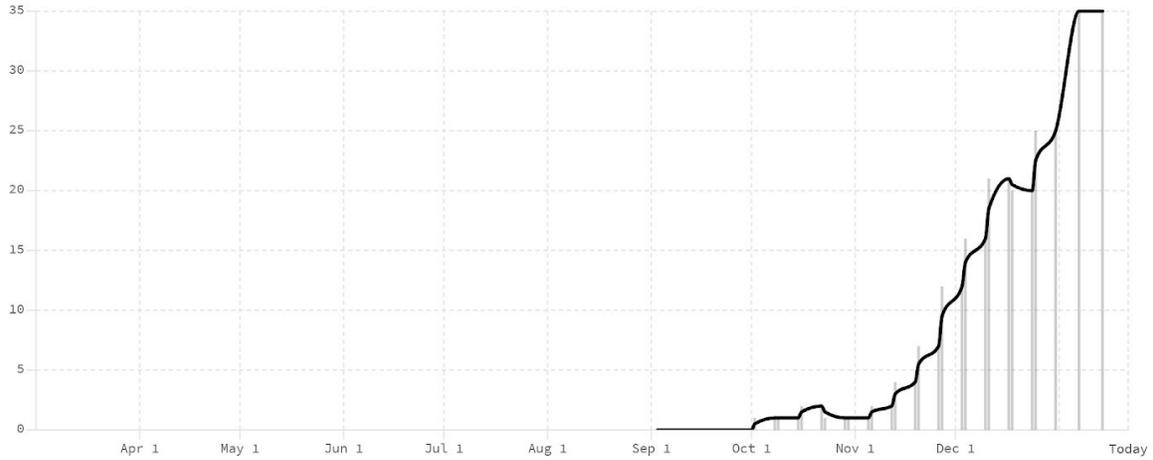


COVID hospitalizations are flattening.

Current COVID Hospitalizations In Sussex Co. NJ

Generated by CovidActNow.org

Last updated January 21, 2021



<https://covidactnow.org/>

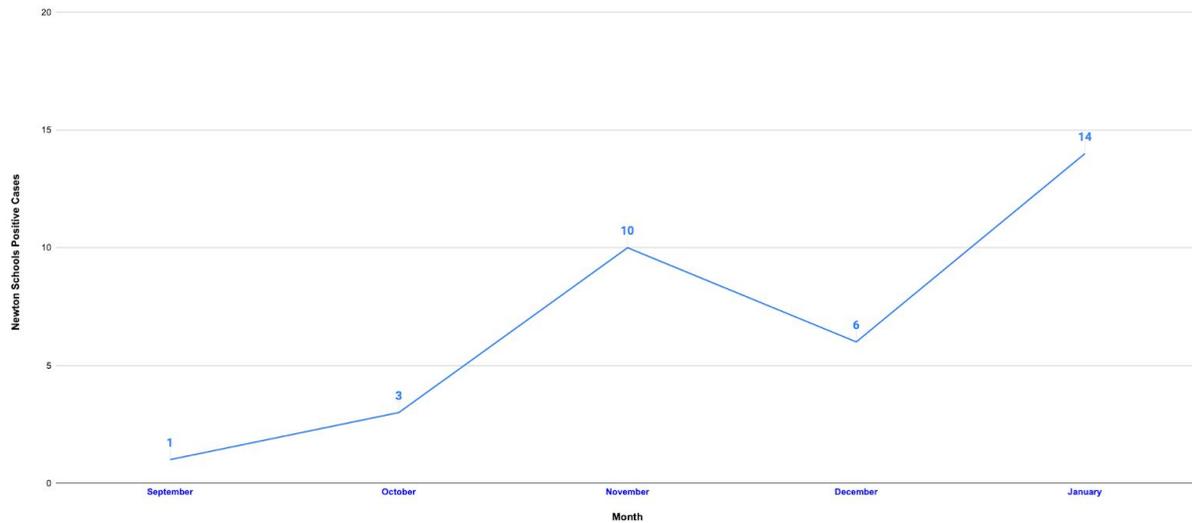
Our municipal case rate is beginning to decrease.

Newton Town Case Rate over Time



We have had one additional school case since last week's report.

Newton Schools Positive Cases per Month



We ask again that everyone continues to practice safe and healthy habits. If you have individual concerns with any aspect of this announcement, please feel free to reach out to me or a member of your school's administrative staff.

Sincerely,

Dr. G. Kennedy Greene