

Town and County of Nantucket Select Board • County Commissioners

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Town of Nantucket Statement to the Nantucket Community (Residents and Visitors) Regarding COVID19 “September Surge” *September 11, 2020*

Recently, Nantucket has experienced what is considered a minor surge in COVID19 cases, with 7 cases on September 9th and another 7 on September 10th, bringing the total number of cases to 77 as of September 10, 2020. These are the highest number of cases in a short period of time that we have so far seen in Nantucket. While this is not an unanticipated situation, due to the nature of the corona virus, we can expect episodic growth in the number of cases over the next 10-14 days. From contact tracing results, this surge is believed to be evidence of community spread of the disease; meaning that 1) an exact route of exposure connecting all the cases cannot be ascertained; and, 2) meaning that we have regressed in our mission to quell the spread of COVID. As a result, our community - residents and visitors - needs to focus on containing this surge and we want to take this opportunity to remind you of the following:

[COVID 19 Testing](#)

Testing at Nantucket Cottage Hospital is defined in the above link. A couple of Frequently Asked Questions:

- What is a “close contact”? Any individual within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient) for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before the onset of illness – with or without face coverings of either individual.
- I visited a business (or other location) where an employee recently tested positive. Why haven't I been contacted and do I need to be tested? Just having been in the same establishment as another person who later tested positive for COVID-19 does not necessarily mean you will be contacted by a contact tracer or need to be tested. Unless you meet the criteria to be considered a close contact, your risk of exposure is exceedingly low, and you will likely not be contacted and do not need to be tested. A close contact is not, for example, simply walking by someone at the store who later turns out to be infected, eating at the same restaurant where an infected person may also have dined, or running/biking/walking by someone on the bike path who is later discovered to be infected.

Renewed Vigilance with Safety Practices

Many of us are tired of wearing a mask, tired of limited social activity, and are worried about the continued viability of our businesses, and non-profit organizations, as well as concerns over child care, school, and our high-risk citizens. In order to get to “the other side” of COVID19 more quickly, it is extremely important that all of us seriously focus and re-focus on the standard safety practices that we have been practicing for months:

- WEAR YOUR FACE COVERING – it protects you and it protects others. You may have the virus and not know it. You do not want to spread it to others. The initial 100 positive cases that came out of the infamous Biogen conference ended up infecting over 20,000 people. That is more than the year-round population of Nantucket. Face coverings are proven to significantly reduce virus spread.
- WASH YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY – especially after contact with surfaces that are not sanitized.
- MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE – this can be challenging sometimes but if you do your best, do not take unnecessary risks (no handshaking, no hugs with people you do not live with, no gatherings with your buddies for the Patriot’s game inside someone’s house; for example, no house parties) and use your face covering when you cannot social distance, you are helping to stop the spread.
- PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR HEALTH – if you feel sick, call your doctor.
- OBTAIN ACCURATE INFORMATION – please check the [Town website](#) and/or the [Nantucket Cottage Hospital](#) websites for up-to-date information and links to a variety of credible sources, including [CDC.gov](#) and [Mass.gov](#).

Measures the Town is Taking in Response to Current Surge

We want to acknowledge the diligence of many of our businesses and citizens for following the protocols that have kept the virus in check for so long. Most of our cultural, retail and service businesses and restaurants have done a fantastic job of ensuring that face coverings are worn, providing sanitization stations and enforcing social distancing. As the pandemic wears on, now is not the time to relax our safety protocols. The current surge is evidence that even “some” relaxation is dangerous. The virus is at its worst when people have lost focus. Yes, we want to play soccer with our family and friends; yes, we want to hang out with our friends and watch sports games on TV without face coverings; yes, we want to cluster together at the beach. If we want to stop the spread of the virus – we cannot do these things as we would “normally” do them. We have to limit contact with people we don’t live with, and we have to limit the number of people at gatherings – for a little longer. Right now, we need stamina and commitment. It’s hard! The consequences are worse. We have seen too many illegal gatherings in certain public places. The lax behavior of a few people has caused restrictions due to this current surge.

As of September 11th the Town is:

- Holding a joint Emergency Meeting of the Board of Health and Select Board on Monday, September 14th at 10am to discuss the potential for renewed restrictions for certain industries where we have seen an increase in cases (ie, landscaping, construction, and other trades).
- Closing Tom Nevers Park and possibly other Town-owned parks and playing fields (including Schools) from Dusk to Dawn. Police Officers will be actively patrolling these areas and will request that people who are at these locations between those times, leave. People at these locations at other times are welcome; however, safety protocols must be followed.
- Nantucket Public Schools will be 100% remote learning through September 30th with a tentative return to hybrid in-person learning planned for Thursday, October 1st dependent upon the health metrics in the community at that time.
- Increasing frequency of testing of staff and residents of Our Island home.
- Increasing COVID19 related inspections at construction sites and landscaping activities.
- Increasing health inspections/visits to various known gathering locations, including private venues.
- Convening daily Town Emergency Operations Team meetings for at least the next 1-2 weeks.
- Increasing messaging to the community as to the importance of continuing proper safety protocols.

We urge the Nantucket community to be vigilant. Ensure that you are taking personal responsibility for your actions and be mindful of the consequences if you do not. Your behavior has an impact on local businesses, the school re-opening schedule, recreational opportunities, high risk community members; and, the ability of the Hospital to manage an influx of people who need to be hospitalized for COVID19.

Thank you.

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