



BOARD OF HEALTH
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HEALTH DEPARTMENT

May 24, 2022

Dear Grafton Residents:

Our region is in the midst of another COVID-19 surge. The coronavirus subvariant behind this surge, BA.2, is more transmissible than Omicron but does not pack the same punch.

Despite the fact that the number of positive COVID-19 tests is increasing and the presence of COVID-19 in our wastewater is on the rise, hospitalizations, intensive care unit (ICU) admissions, and deaths have only slightly increased. This means that standard operations in the city's two hospital systems—UMass Memorial Health and Saint Vincent Hospital—have remained in place. Nonetheless, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has classified Worcester County as a high-risk community.

The good news is that the United Kingdom, which has been going through a similar surge four weeks ahead of us, has seen a precipitous drop in cases since the beginning of April. This indicates we just need to get through another month of this uptick before we will likely see infections decrease.

In the meantime, UMass Memorial Health and Saint Vincent Hospital, along with the Worcester Division of Public Health, lead agency of the Central MA Regional Public Health Alliance (CMRPHA) make the following recommendations:

1. Unvaccinated individuals should get vaccinated as soon as possible.
2. Vaccinated individuals should stay up to date with their boosters.
3. We recommend wearing a well-fitting mask indoors, particularly if you or someone you know has increased risk of COVID-19 complications due to factors such as:
 - Age (60 or older)
 - Immunocompromised or experiencing illness
 - Living with a chronic condition like lung disease, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or obesity
4. Avoid crowded spaces whenever possible.
5. Consider wearing a mask in crowded indoor spaces (such as graduations or sporting or music events).
6. If you are dining at a restaurant, try to wear your mask as much as possible.
7. If you or a member of your household are feeling cold or flu symptoms, please test yourselves and stay home from work and school.

While the days of mask mandates are hopefully behind us, we should make a risk assessment for ourselves to determine whether masks are appropriate. We strongly urge that getting vaccinated not be viewed as optional, but as an important and effective public health remedy that will keep these subvariants from continuing to mutate and cause a surge in cases. We are confident that if we all work together as we did when the pandemic first started, we can keep our community safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel J. Finn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Daniel J. Finn
Vice Chairman

Effective 5/24/2022 to 6/24/2022