

# COVID-19 Update

## Status Update

### Phasing into Age 75+!

We are being inundated with information about COVID-19 vaccines and the phases of its distribution, and many of us are likely confused about which vaccination phase Massachusetts is currently in. Massachusetts is presently in Phase 2, Group 1 of its [vaccine rollout](#). This means that everyone who is 75 years of age or older is now eligible to be vaccinated. People who were eligible for the vaccine in Phase 1 are still eligible to receive the vaccine in Phase 2. You can take a [quick survey on the state website](#) to see if you are eligible to be vaccinated at this time. If you are, the state has [created a database](#) to help you locate the vaccine distribution site located nearest you by zip code. A list of sites will appear and you can click the link for your preferred location to make an appointment. Updated information about the COVID-19 vaccines and distribution plans can be found on the [MA COVID website](#).

### Different Vaccines, Same Recommendations

Currently, two COVID-19 vaccines are approved for use in the United States under the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) rules of the FDA: Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna. Another three vaccines are in [Phase 3](#) clinical trials, the last step in vaccine development that tests whether vaccines are effective against COVID-19. This means these vaccines are one step closer to being approved for use in the US. While the currently available vaccines are [designed differently](#) and have different distribution and storage requirements, both the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are effective after two doses; The second dose of the Moderna vaccine should be given 4 weeks after the first dose and the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine should be given 3 weeks after the first dose. One dose will not result in sufficient protection from the virus

### A Deal with the Land Down Under

At the beginning of February, the United States government sealed a deal with the Australian government to buy \$231.8 million worth of [at-home rapid COVID-19 testing kits](#). These kits were given [emergency use authorization](#) by the FDA in December 2020 and were determined to be more than 95% accurate for identifying COVID-19 in clinical trials. The test works like this: you use a nasal swab (provided in the testing kit) to swirl inside your nose, you add a few drops of liquid provided in the testing kit to the swab and then insert the swab into a small container. Your results will then be sent to your smartphone within 15 minutes using a special app. These testing kits are expected to become available for purchase later this month and are expected to cost about \$30. No prescription or referral is needed to buy the kits, which is good news for some, however it also means that the kits will not be covered by most health insurance plans. This is the first of many steps that will make widespread COVID-19 testing more available and accessible in the US.

The Uxbridge board of health has added some new features to their website! To see more information on COVID-19 in the Uxbridge community, check out the [Uxbridge Board of Health COVID-19 page](#).

**February 5, 2021**

### Important Dates:

**February 7<sup>th</sup>:** Super Bowl

**February 14<sup>th</sup>:**

Valentine's Days

**February 15<sup>th</sup>:** Presidents' Day

### The Week in Numbers:

Cumulative Number of COVID-19 Cases* in Uxbridge Residents	671
Average Number of New Cases per Day (per 100,000 people)**	28.8
Test Positivity Rate	5.41 %

\*confirmed by [PCR testing](#)

\*\*Information from 2/4 [state data](#)

### About this Publication:

The COVID-19 Update is produced by the Uxbridge Board of Health with the help of volunteers from the [Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps](#). The Update provides residents relevant and timely updates about the COVID-19 situation, other public health topics and related news from the community. It is published every other Friday, and is accurate up to the time of publication.

## New Resource

The new website [Mass.gov/StopCOVID19](https://www.mass.gov/StopCOVID19) provides residents and local business owners with information on how to stop the spread, state restrictions on gathering sizes, testing locations and materials that can be printed for display in apartment complexes, restaurants and community areas.

## High Risk Towns

There are 62 cities and towns in Massachusetts that are now considered high risk for community transmission of COVID-19. These include Uxbridge, Northbridge, Douglas, and Blackstone. For a full list of these communities [click here](#).

## Helpful Links

- [Uxbridge Support Services](#)
- [Mass.gov/StopCOVID19](https://www.mass.gov/StopCOVID19)
- [CDC COVID-19 Info](#)
- [Report Workplace Violations](#)



## Questions?

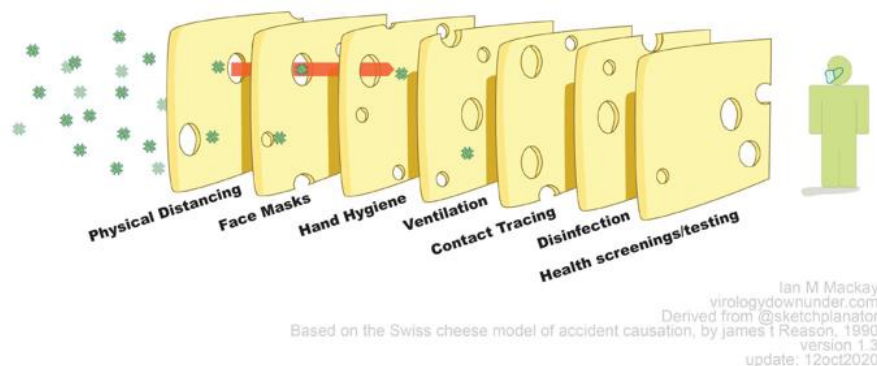
Contact the  
Board of Health at:  
508-278-8600 ext. 8  
[boh@uxbridge-ma.gov](mailto:boh@uxbridge-ma.gov)

## COVID-19 Variants: What Does it Mean?

There are currently 3 [COVID-19 variants](#) (slightly different versions of the virus) [circulating in the United States](#). The B.1.1.7 variant, also known as the UK variant, has been in the United States since at least December 2020 and is thought to be associated with an increased transmissibility (because it may infect people more quickly) and possibly more severe symptoms. A new B.1.351 variant from South Africa has been in the United States since at least the end of January 2021 and is not believed to increase COVID-19 infection severity. The last variant, known as the P.1 variant, is from Brazil and has been in the United States since at least the end of January 2021. The P.1 variant is believed to be more transmissible and there is some early evidence that it may be able to evade antibodies generated by previous COVID-19 infection. The [CDC is monitoring these new variants](#) in the US and scientists are continuing to rigorously study them.

While this is scary for many of us, it is important to remember that this virus is expected to mutate the same way we expect the flu virus to mutate every year. Vaccines are still believed to be effective against these new variants but their appearance means that it's that much more important for vaccines to be administered to as many people as quickly as possible, before the virus has the chance to mutate yet again. These new variants do not mean that we are all destined to be infected. If we continue to follow the safety measures that have been **proven** to protect against infection – wearing masks, washing hands, limiting indoor gatherings and keeping our distance from others - we can expect to slow the spread of these new variants and prevent the virus from living among us long enough to mutate again.

## The Swiss Cheese Model of COVID-19 Defense



Good News Corner



The Uxbridge Board of Health has been approved to hold COVID vaccination clinics for residents of Uxbridge, Douglas, Northbridge and Mendon. The clinics will be held at the McCloskey School on Wednesdays. The exact start date is not known, and appointments cannot be made until we know the exact number of doses we will receive. You can still take the survey [COVID-19 Vaccine Notification Form](#) to receive information about your individual eligibility. See the Board of Health website and Facebook page for current updates.