

# VMG COVID-19 UPDATE

Friday, October 23,  
2020  
sue # 89

Is



*And all the news just repeats itself  
Like some forgotten dream, that we've both seen  
.....John Prine*

I realize that some of you may not have seen the movie “Ground Hog Day.” Here’s the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GncQtURdcE4>

I think, to some extent, we all feel like its ground hog day again. The news just repeats, though it gets worse each day. Now there are 41.9 million cases worldwide and 1.14 million deaths. In the U.S. there are now 8.49 million cases with 224,000 deaths. Yesterday there were 78,000 newly identified COVID cases in the U.S. and 828 deaths.

The CDC yesterday redefined what “close contact” means for COVID-19. Up until yesterday they defined close contact as 15 minutes in a room with a COVID positive patient. Now it’s 15 minutes or more over the course of a day. This means shorter contacts are “cumulative.”

Here in New England we are still mostly not seeing a large spike though the Boston public schools are suspending all in-person learning as the positivity rate in the eastern part of the state is rising. There is no reason to believe that we will not see a spike sometime in the next few weeks or months.

Here’s the latest Massachusetts DPH community level map of COVID rates:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-level-covid-19-data-reporting>

The overall positivity rate for the State of Massachusetts as of 10.21.20 (7 day rolling average) was 1.1%, about the same as last week. In our area, Sunderland, Amherst, Holyoke, Springfield, East Longmeadow are now in the “red” category meaning that the most recent positivity rates are higher than desired (showing the virus is still here). At VMG, the rate for all patient tests completed the week ending 10/16/20 was 0.47%. One case was positive last week of 212 tests completed.

So, with the holiday season and the winter months coming, our best tools for protection remain our masks, social distancing, hand hygiene, and, most important...vigilance and consciousness. We need to keep being deliberate about assessing situations in our daily lives that could lead to infection. For many of us, perhaps the best gift we can give our loved ones who do not live with us is protection from transmission. This may be the first Thanksgiving where our best sign of love is staying physically apart (or, if we are visiting, being conscious of distancing, wearing masks, hand hygiene). There will be more Thanksgivings. Let’s make those a sure thing by protecting each other as best we can this holiday season.

If you must travel this holiday season, here's the latest Massachusetts DPH graphic showing restricted states.

[https://www.mass.gov/files/styles/embedded\\_half\\_width/public/2020-10/US-Travel-Map\\_2020-10-16\\_01-01.png?itok=7dk6avn5](https://www.mass.gov/files/styles/embedded_half_width/public/2020-10/US-Travel-Map_2020-10-16_01-01.png?itok=7dk6avn5)

### **At VMG**

Information from Gina:

- Flu vaccinations are going well. A big thank you for all the work being done by all staff to help our patients and each other get vaccinated (vaccines don't save lives; vaccination saves lives).
- Lab returning indoors in next 7-10 days. Please see the email earlier this week from Debbie Bolognani for timing and procedures for managing patient flows

Information from Martha Mastroberti:

- Carebot continues with scheduling flu vaccine appointments. All high risk and medium risk patients have been contacted. 2,000 flu clinic appointments scheduled. Carebot also recorded 1100 patient who received vaccine elsewhere.
- PHQ9 forms for Wellness visits should be available through OhMD by 11/5.

Since I used lines from John Prine at the opening, here's a video of a live recording late in his career:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gOVT7JbPsQ>

Ann Esrick suggested this positive, locally produced, video of life in COVID times in Northampton:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPNbE6W7N2o&feature=youtu.be>

That's all for now. Thank you once again for all you do,

Please stay safe and well. Please continue to do what works:

- Please wash your hands (often),
- Don't touch your face,
- Maintain social/physical distancing (it works), and avoid large gatherings and crowds
- Definitely wear a mask (it is not a political statement; it's a public health good), (and for those patients and others who wear their masks without covering their mouth and nose, help them understand that both are necessary)
- Don't come to work if you feel sick,
- Continue to be in touch with and take care of each other, and help to educate everyone.

Have a great weekend.

Joel

*Be patient; be mindful*