

Almost 7,000 new COVID cases in Erie & Niagara counties

Coronavirus cases continue to rise in Erie and Niagara counties.

The Erie County Department of Health provided an update Tuesday on COVID-19 data. For the week ending Dec. 4, ECDOH received reports for 5,537 new COVID-19 cases among Erie County residents, a 30% increase from the previous week – and an all-time weekly high total. Erie County's COVID-19 case rate of 580 cases per 100,000 residents in the past seven days is an increase from the previous week's case rate of 448.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention set a case rate threshold of 100 or more cases per 100,000 residents in the past seven days for a community to be considered to have "high transmission."

Of the new COVID-19 cases last week, 29% were among City of Buffalo residents. For reference, the city makes up 29% of all Erie County residents. This past week, the ZIP codes with the highest seven-day case rates per 100,000 persons were: 14203 (Buffalo, 20 cases), 14055 (East Concord, 15 cases), 14057 (Eden, 75 cases), 14218 (Lackawanna, 173 cases) and 14086 (Lancaster, 278 cases). Five ZIP codes had a case rate of more than 800 new cases per 100,000 residents over seven days. Of note: 14203 and 14055 ZIP codes have smaller populations, and their case rate can be impacted significantly by case totals. Twenty-five ZIP codes have 7-day case rates of more than 600 new cases per 100,000 residents.

Contact tracing case investigations continue to note family and household clusters of COVID-19 cases. With the holiday season approaching, ECDOH encourages people who plan to gather with friends and family to stay home and away from others if ill. Also, it stated, "COVID-19 testing is a tool to make sure you know your COVID-19 status before small gatherings, especially if other guests are elderly, have chronic medical or immunocompromising conditions, are pregnant, or unvaccinated."

About 51,000 COVID-19 test reports were received last week, an increase from the previous week's total, and the most tests reported in one week since April. Weekly test reports have remained stable over the past four weeks. ECDOH and health care providers within Erie County still have substantial diagnostic testing capacity.

ECDOH stated, "People who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, should strongly consider a diagnostic COVID-19 test. The New York State Department of

Health maintains a list of testing locations. ECDOH created a list of community COVID-19 testing resources for parents and caregivers. Free COVID-19 NAAT tests are available through ECDOH by calling 716-858-2929 to schedule an appointment. Appointments are required for COVID-19 testing through ECDOH. Wait times for ECDOH appointment telephone line are longest in the morning. Callers may choose to call after 10 a.m. if they want to avoid a wait."

The weekly positivity rate was 10.8%, up from 9.9% for the week ending Nov. 27. This is the highest weekly positivity percentage since the earliest stages of the pandemic in May 2020, when testing capacity was low. The 30-39-year-old age group had the highest number of COVID-19 cases last week; this age group also had the highest 7-day case rate per 100,000 persons, at 899. The age groups with the highest positivity rates are children under 14 years old: 12% for 0-4; 13.2% for 5-10; 16.4% for 11-13; and 13.7% for 14-17.

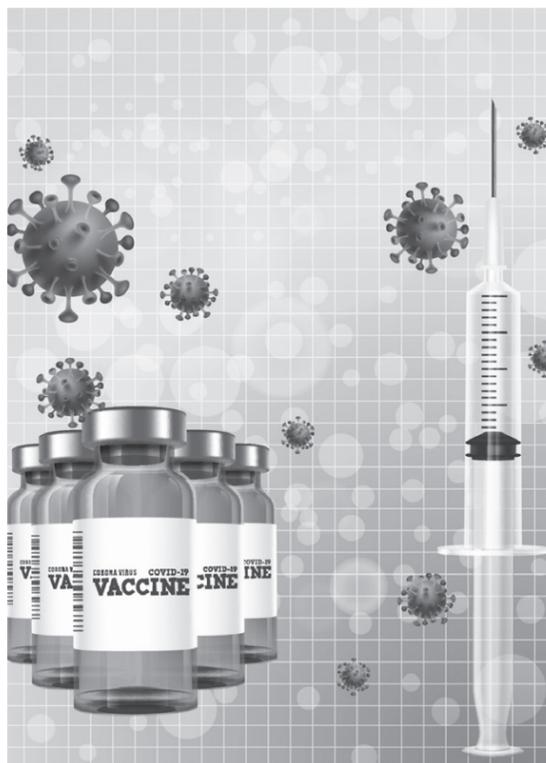
ECDOH stated, "These higher positivity rates may reflect lower relative numbers of tests in these age groups, and a higher likelihood that symptomatic children and adolescents will seek a COVID-19 test for return to school purposes."

For children under age 18 years, case totals increased from the previous week by about 25%, to 1,345 cases.

Cases among children under 18 years comprised 25% of all cases reported for last week.

The school team in the ECDOH office of epidemiology is managing a large volume of cases among K-12 students and school staff. Data for the week ending Nov. 27 are incomplete, because official test reports are pending. The Thanksgiving holiday may have contributed to a lower number of tests and positive test results for that time period. These weekly totals remain higher than at any other point in this academic year or the previous academic year.

With 376 COVID-19 hospitalizations reported in Erie County hospitals on Dec. 5, the number of patients admitted to Erie County hospitals with COVID-19 has ranged from a low of 284 hospitalizations to a high of 376 hospitalizations over the past two weeks. Of those, 257 patients hospitalized with COVID-19 (68%) were not fully vaccinated. Among those patients, 51 (74%) of 69 patients admitted to the ICU were not fully vaccinated; and 36 (72%) of 50 patients with an airway assist were not fully vaccinated.



ECDOH stated, "Vaccines work to reduce the risk of serious illness and hospitalization."

The New York State Department of Health publishes statewide data for COVID-19 cases over time by vaccination status, and daily hospital admissions over time by vaccination status.

In addition, ECDOH received reports of 52 COVID-19 associated deaths in the past seven days; these reports were from October, November and December. Total COVID-19-related deaths from March 2020 to Dec. 2, 2021, now stand at 2,203, with 927 reported in 2021. CDC publishes national rates of COVID-19 related cases, hospitalizations and deaths by vaccination status at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#rates-by-vaccine-status>.

With data compiled by the ECDOH epidemiology office through Dec. 6, 23.9% of 5-11-year-olds in Erie County have at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Additional data, including vaccination estimates by ZIP code, are posted to the ECDOH website. NYSDOH also updates vaccination data by demographics, by county and by ZIP code.

ECDOH has an active schedule of COVID-19 vaccine clinics, listed at www.erie.gov/vax. Additional clinics have been added throughout the county through Dec. 30. Clinics for 5-11-year-olds are listed at www.erie.gov/vax. ECDOH will also vaccinate any eligible Erie County resident at their home. Call 716-858-2929 for the "Vax Visit" program.

ECDOH encourages Erie County residents who are not fully vac-

inated to begin their COVID-19 vaccine series. It stated, "COVID-19 vaccination is especially important for youth and families attending school or child care."

ECDOH vaccine clinics will provide a COVID-19 booster dose to anyone age 18 and older as long as enough time has elapsed from their initial series completion (six months for Pfizer and Moderna; two months for J&J). ECDOH encourages people to

review the recommended booster eligibility criteria, evaluate their risk factors and talk to their own physician with questions. NYSDOH has further information about booster doses.

Niagara County

Niagara County didn't fare any better.

On Wednesday, the Niagara County Department of Health issued a weekly update on positive COVID-19 cases from Dec. 2-8. It stated, "We regretfully report the deaths of 16 Niagara County residents from COVID-19. We extend our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of these individuals."

NCDOH reported 1,330 new positive cases – up from 1,050 a

week ago. The 7-day average positivity rate is 11.6% (<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/positive-tests-over-time-region-and-county>).

The to-date total of positives (isolations + recoveries + deaths) is now 30,140, with 1,540 active cases (1,480 isolating at home, 60 in a hospital).

Of those who have tested positive, 28,165 recovered, while 435 passed away.

NCDOH reports 137,915 residents have at least one vaccine dose (<https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/covid-19-vaccine-tracker>).

For more:
√ New York State Department of Health, COVID-19 boosters: <http://ny.gov/boosters>

√ The Niagara County heat map that breaks the positive cases down by municipality since the beginning of the pandemic can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/ybgzmusw>

√ The Niagara County heat map that breaks down active cases by municipality can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/y5b4hldh>

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The chicken wing place with the most votes will be prominently featured in the Niagara County Tribune-Sentinel, Grand Island PennySaver and Island Dispatch, with additional photos and a video posted at www.wnypapers.com.

When you cast a vote for your favorite chicken wing destination, you'll be entered to win a gift certificate courtesy of an area restaurant. Winners will be chosen by random draw and notified by phone or email.

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Name (Full): _____
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- THURS 6AM-8PM - Chicken Milanese or Fish - Haddock - Battered, Breaded, Baked
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