

New York offers comprehensive new testing site map

On Sunday, the governor's office posted a site where people can find coronavirus test sites by ZIP code. Access it at <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/find-test-site-near-you>.

Per the site, "New York state continues to increase testing capacity for COVID-19 on a daily basis. The guidance below enables New York state to prioritize resources to meet the public health need. Individuals who have questions regarding eligibility or access for testing should call the New York state COVID-19 hotline at 1-888-364-3065 or visit the NYSDOH website <https://covid-19screening.health.ny.gov>.

"Please call the testing site or your health care provider before you go for testing."

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced New York has doubled testing capacity to reach 40,000 diagnostic tests per day, and encouraged eligible New Yorkers to visit the new website to find a nearby testing site.

"Throughout this entire pandemic, testing was key to controlling the virus and now it will be key to monitoring the virus as we begin reopening in regions across the state," Cuomo said. "New York has worked aggressively to build a massive state-wide sample collection network and is now testing more than any state or country per capita, but our new problem is we have more sites and capacity than we're actually using. The more New Yorkers

get tested, the better – and we are going to ensure to all individuals who will return to the workplace in phase one of our reopening plan have access to testing, and we are launching a new website to make it easier for New Yorkers to find nearby testing sites."

This announcement comes three weeks after the governor announced an agreement for the state to work with the federal government to grow New York's daily testing capacity from 20,000 tests a day to 40,000 tests a day.

The state's diagnostic testing criteria now includes all individuals who would return to the workplace in phase one of the state's reopening plan. New Yorkers eligible for diagnostic testing now include:

✓ Any individual who has COVID-19 symptoms;

✓ Any individual who has had contact with a person known to be positive with COVID-19;

✓ Any individual who is subject to a precautionary or mandatory quarantine;

✓ Any individual who is employed as a health care worker, nursing home worker or first responder;

✓ Any essential worker who directly interacts with the public while working; and

✓ Any individual who would return to the workplace in phase one of the state's reopening plan.

New Yorkers can visit coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-testing and enter their address to

NIAGARA COUNTY, NEW YORK COVID-19 Testing Centers

CALL AHEAD

Mount Saint Marys Hospital - Lewiston 716-297-480
 Public Safety Training Facility - Lockport 716-278-1900
 Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center Health Home, 80 Main St. - Lockport 716-278-4496
 Eastern Niagara Hospital - Lockport 716-514-5780
 Wellnow Urgent Care - Niagara Falls 716-371-4260
 Community Health Center of Niagara - Niagara Falls 716-400-1817
 Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center 716-278-4496
 Summit Healthplex - Niagara Falls 716-278-4496
 Rite Aid - 1030 Pine Ave - Niagara Falls 716-285-0514
 DeGraff Memorial Hospital - North Tonawanda 716-859-3222
 Niagara County Community College - Sanborn 1-888-364-3065
 Wellnow Urgent Care - Wheatfield 716-799-1002

Courtesy of LCTV

view a list and a map view of the nearest testing sites. The state has also partnered with Google Maps to display testing site results. New Yorkers can search "COVID testing near me" on Google Maps to easily find the nearest testing sites.

Cuomo said, "On the reopening strategy, we've said all along that it's data driven and a big piece of the data-driven strategy is the testing component."

Speaking Wednesday on LCTV, Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysh said, "We know that, as we continue to test more people, those numbers for the overall infection

rate continue to decrease in the area. Again, that is good news; that means that what we have been doing is working. And we can see better where we stand when more individuals are tested; that gives us better data to make decisions by.

"We've seen quite a bit of expansion of testing in the area over just the last few weeks, and the Niagara County Department of Health has put together a list for you of all those testing sites that are available within Niagara County."

She explained, "If you want to get tested I suggest that you do. Guidelines are very broad now as

far as who can be tested. The governor encourages everyone to get tested; especially individuals, of course, who have symptoms should be tested as soon as possible. Those of you who are front-line workers and around a lot of people, already, should be getting tested, and any individual who is ready to go back to work in the phase one reopening process, the governor tells us, is now eligible, as well.

"Obviously, testing and those numbers that we get back is a major component in the reopening of Western New York and our region, and those metrics from the governor that we need to meet."

Western New York now in phase one of reopening; houses of worship can begin to welcome people back in small numbers

Gov. Andrew Cuomo gave Western New York the OK to enter into phase one of his "New York Forward" reopening on Tuesday. Nonessential services have been closed since March 20, when Cuomo put "New York State on PAUSE" to slow the spread of COVID-19. In broad terms, phase one allows the reopening of construction; agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; retail – limited to curbside or in-store pickup or drop-off; manufacturing; and wholesale trade.

The governor is using seven metrics based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization to determine New York's reopening process.

At Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center on Monday, Cuomo said, "We're opening regions that have hit the data points; hit the metrics. ... It's been a long, painful period, but

we (Western New York) start to reopen tomorrow."

When Are the Next Phases?

So, what comes next? Cuomo's "New York Forward" reopening plan states, "Each region will reopen businesses in phases, with at least two weeks in between each phase. This allows state and local leaders to monitor the effects of the reopening and ensure hospitalization and infection rates are not increasing before moving to the next phase and permitting more economic activity.

"The phase-in plan prioritizes businesses considered to have a greater economic impact and inherently low risks of infection for the workers and customers, followed by other businesses considered to have less economic impact, and those that present a higher risk of infection spread. Additionally, when phasing-in reopenings, regions must not open attractions or businesses

COVID-19

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that would draw a large number of visitors from outside the local area."

Cuomo said it will still be some time before groups of 10-plus can gather together at sporting events or tourist locations. Presently, these activities fall into category four.

"You have a couple of hundred people, and you have one person who is infected, you have a problem," the governor said.

Speaking to the Buffalo Niagara Partnership Monday morning, Western New York's "control center" head, Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul, said, "As we start getting into the other phases ... if we start slipping in the metrics and

how we're doing with respect to the rate of infection, we're going to have to stay in that phase and not get to the next one.

"And we really want to get to each phase in a systemic manner every two weeks. We have the opportunity, but that all comes down to whether or not the public and employees and others are being really smart about these protocols."

Cuomo explained, "Fourteen days is the guideline, because it's basically the incubation period of the virus. It will show up in about 14 days. ... It's a pure function of management of numbers."

What About Large Gatherings?

The governor noted, "I also have been encouraging major sports teams to plan reopening without fans, but the games could be televised. New York state will help those major sports franchises to do just that. Hockey, basketball, baseball, football – whoever can reopen, we're a ready, willing and able partner."

"Personal disclosure, I want to

watch the Buffalo Bills."

On Wednesday, Cuomo announced religious gatherings of no more than 10 people would be allowed statewide where strict social distancing measures are enforced and all participants wear masks. Additionally, drive-in and parking lot services would also be permitted beginning Thursday.

The governor announced the state is convening an Interfaith Advisory Council to discuss proposals to safely bring back religious services.

"I understand their desire to get back to religious ceremonies as soon as possible. As former altar boy, I get it," Cuomo said. "I think even at this time of stress and when people are so anxious and so confused, I think those religious ceremonies can be very comforting. But we need to find out how to do it, and do it safely, and do it smartly. The last thing we want to do is have a religious ceremony that winds up having more people infected."

"A religious ceremony by definition is a gathering. ... It's a large number of people coming together. We know from New Rochelle, Westchester, the first hotspot, that religious ceremonies can be very dangerous. So, we all want to do the same thing, the question is how do we do it, and how do we do it smartly and efficiently. I will be talking with members of the religious community on doing just that; and I'm sure we can come up with a way that does it, but does it intelligently."

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