

Mayor's Update

The cumulative total of positive COVID-19 cases among Newton residents increased to 710 people, according to preliminary data through Tuesday, May 19, an increase of 6 people since Monday, May 18. Of the 710 positive cases, approximately 44 percent are residents of Newton nursing homes and assisted living facilities.



The percentage of people “post-isolation,” meaning they have met the criteria to discontinue isolation after a COVID-19 diagnosis and are considered “recovered,” continues to increase. Now 74 percent of people in Newton diagnosed with COVID-19 (outside nursing homes and assisted living facilities) are post-isolation. Last week (May 13), this percentage was 73 percent, and the week before (April 29) it was 71 percent and a month ago (April 22), it was 56 percent.

The symptom onset graph is updated and shows Newton’s 710 cases by symptom onset date or by test date if symptom onset date is unavailable. The data shown in the graph is encouraging.

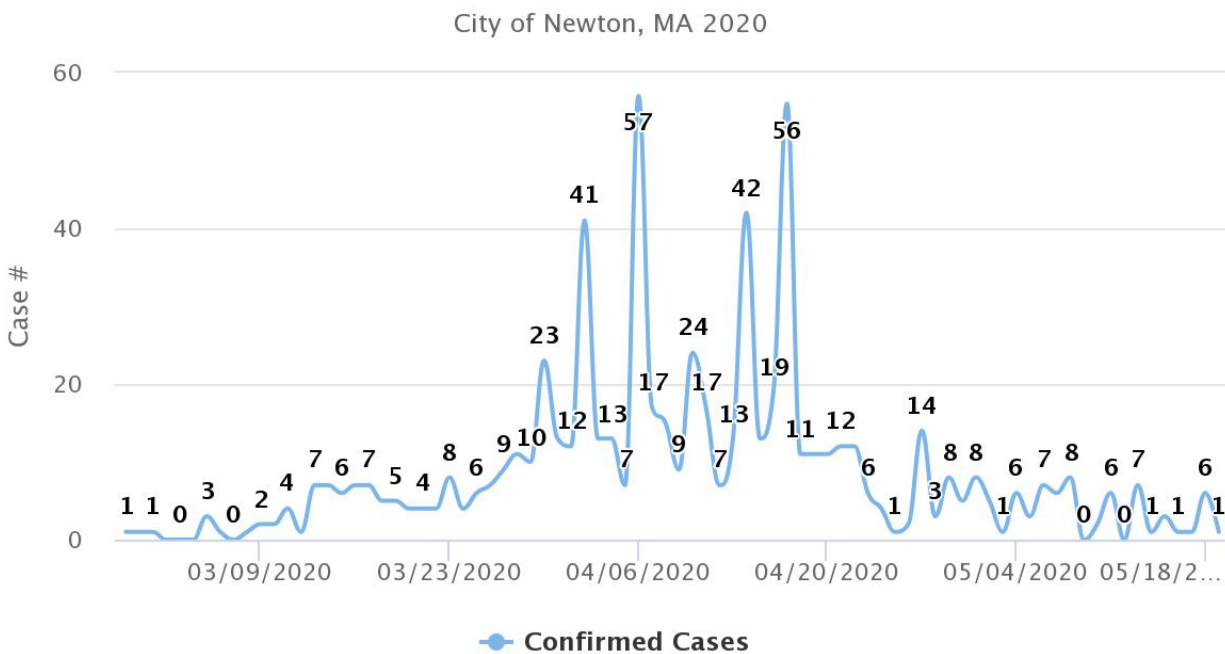
COVID-19 in Newton

Total Cases
710

Total Deaths
105

**As of 5/19*

Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



Graph data through 5/19/2020

This past week, we learned of another nine Newton residents who had a COVID-19 diagnosis and died. The preliminary cumulative total is now 105 people. Of those who have died, approximately 79 percent are age 80 and older. We know grieving for loved ones who have died is difficult. In these extraordinary times when our usual rituals have been so drastically curtailed, it's that much harder. Our thoughts and our sympathies are with all those who are grieving.

For those of you closely following our data reporting, you may have noticed a significant difference in the percentage of Newton residents age 80 and older who had a COVID-19 diagnosis and died. On May 7, we reported this for the first time as 94 percent; however, we accidentally made a mistake by basing that percentage on people age 70 and older (instead of age 80). Our apologies. On May 7, the correct percentage for how many of our positive cases are age 80 and older was 80 percent; last week it remained at 80 percent and this week it changed very slightly to 79 percent.

An updated periodic data report is also now available on the Newton COVID-19 data [website](#). In addition to what I've already shared with you above, the demographic slides are updated (they look similar to the previous report). More women (59 percent) than men (41 percent) have confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Newton.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has revised its format for reporting statewide COVID-19 [data](#). It now includes the Data Dashboard with metrics that are being used to inform reopening decision making.

\$2.5 Million for Newton's COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program

The Newton COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program will assist those Newton households who are facing a loss of income due to COVID-19 and are now struggling to pay housing costs. The funding assistance will cover 70% of an eligible household's monthly rent for up to three months. The assistance has a monthly cap of \$2,500 per household, or \$7,500 per household, for three months.

Newton renters who are experiencing a reduced income as a direct result of COVID-19 and earn 80% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) at the time their application is submitted are encouraged to apply. (For example, a family of four at the 80% AMI level has an annual income of \$96,250.) Households currently receiving rental assistance (e.g. Public Housing tenants, RAFT, Section 8, MRVP or other locally administered support) are also eligible for this program.

A special category of Newton homeowners, those with deed-restricted properties, are also eligible to apply provided they meet the same eligibility criteria as renters. (The deed restriction must be recorded with the Registry of Deeds.)

I'm grateful that Monday night, Newton's City Council approved the Community Preservation Committee's recent recommendation to allocate another \$2 million in Community Preservation Act (CPA) affordable housing funds to the Newton COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program. I had moved forward \$500,000 of federal Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funds to this critical program which launched last week. It's great to have all of us working together to assist Newton residents experiencing hardship during this crisis.

We have partnered with the Metro West Collaborative Development to administer the program on behalf of the City. Metro West is a non-profit community

development corporation based in Newton with a long, successful track record.

Interested?

Contact Metro West at robyn@metrowestcd.org (preferred method) or 617-923-3505 x5 to begin the application process.

The application deadline is Wednesday, June 3, 2020 and the lottery will be held June 10, 2020.

The details of this program, including program guidelines, can also be found at newtonma.gov/housingrelief.

Planning Newton's Reopening

We are deeply involved in deciding how and when we will begin reopening City Hall, the Senior Center, the Newton Free Library and other City buildings. We're also knee deep in evaluating Newton's recreation programs and camps to determine if we can safely operate this summer.

These are difficult decisions, addressing everyone's health and safety and considering how to help families with children, address the needs of our residents, and move work forward. I'm working closely with Commissioner of Health and Human Resources Deborah Youngblood, Emergency Management Director Bruce Proia and the City's Department heads as we determine the best ways to responsibly and safely reopen Newton. The health and safety of our residents, businesspeople and employees is paramount.

We will use many techniques to create healthy, safe environments and reduce the risk of spreading infection. They will range from continuing many services virtually and online, having appointments for in-person service, adding lines on the floor to mark 6 feet from counters, adding plexiglass dividers, and changing the flow of public and employee "traffic" through halls and offices to provide more distance between people. When these measures are in place, we will reopen. We know it will take at least a number of weeks.

We are also looking carefully at when playing fields and courts will be reopened, and if there is any scenario in which Crystal Lake, Gath Pool and camps could be safely opened this summer. We know it will be 80 degrees on Friday and summer is around the corner so the decisions need to be made soon.

We will take a slow and careful approach to reopening Newton. This aligns with the Governor's four-phase *Reopening Massachusetts* plan. Currently we are in the Phase 1 "Start" period that almost always continues to limit gathering sizes to less than 10 people and allows offices, labs, hair salons, curbside retail, worship and other [activities](#) with limitations and required actions. Requirements include mandatory workplace safety standards for all businesses and non-profits in Newton, such as physical distancing measures, hygiene and cleaning protocols, use of face coverings and appropriate staffing and training.

This first phase will last a minimum of three weeks. The Governor will decide when to move to Phase 2 depending on improvements in six different public health indicators. Here in Newton, at this time, we are following the Governor's Phase 1 "Start" program and will continue to look at conditions here and consider modifications, if necessary.

July 4 Festivities Cancelled

Newton Community Pride and I announce with deep regret the cancellation of the July 4th celebrations due to the highly infectious coronavirus outbreak.

We are cancelling not only the fireworks in the evening, but also the children's events in the morning at Newton Centre Playground as well as the Open-Air Market at Albemarle and the amusement rides and games that traditionally precede the fireworks.

Understandably, we are prioritizing safety and health as physical distancing is not possible at our July 4th festivities. We took into consideration the safety and health not only of the people of all ages coming to the celebrations as well as vendors, musicians, staff, police officers, firefighters and the many who make these events so special. This is a disappointing decision but the right one for Newton.

As our community goes through this unprecedented crisis together, we all look forward to gathering together on Sunday, July 4th, 2021 to celebrate our great nation.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Come together and break bread with us virtually next Wednesday morning, May 27, at 8:30 a.m., for the 46th Annual Mayor's Community Breakfast in conjunction with the Harmony Foundation and the Newton Interfaith Clergy Association. There is no registration fee, but technology limits us to 1,000 participants so please register early at bit.ly/newtonbreakfast.



P.P.S. Dear Owen, Thanks so much for your letter requesting 5 days of weekend and 2 days of school. I do have an Emergency Order in place that gives me broader authority in this unusual period. Unfortunately, that

DEAR MAYOR
FULLER,
CAN THERE
PLEASE BE 5
DAYS OF WEEKEND
AND 2 DAYS OF
SCHOOL? BECAUSE
I LOVE MY MOM AND
DAD, AND SCHOOL
IS BORING.
LOVE WENJ.
(5 years old)

authority does not extend to extending the duration of the weekend. I'm so glad you're enjoying this extra time with your Mom and Dad. I can imagine that despite your teacher's best efforts school might be a bit boring over Zoom. Enjoy this special period of being home with your parents! I'm guessing that they are enjoying this extra time with you and perhaps still looking forward to the time when you return to first grade in the fall.

All my best,
Mayor Fuller



P.P.P.S. Thank you to the Chinese American Association (CAAN) of Newton who delivered lunches for firefighters at six stations today. They are delivering again tomorrow! Li Zhen, who is coordinating the *Food for Love Day* effort, wrote to Fire Chief Lucchetti, "We are grateful for their brave work at this trying time."

