

Thursday, April 21, 2022

## Mayor's Update



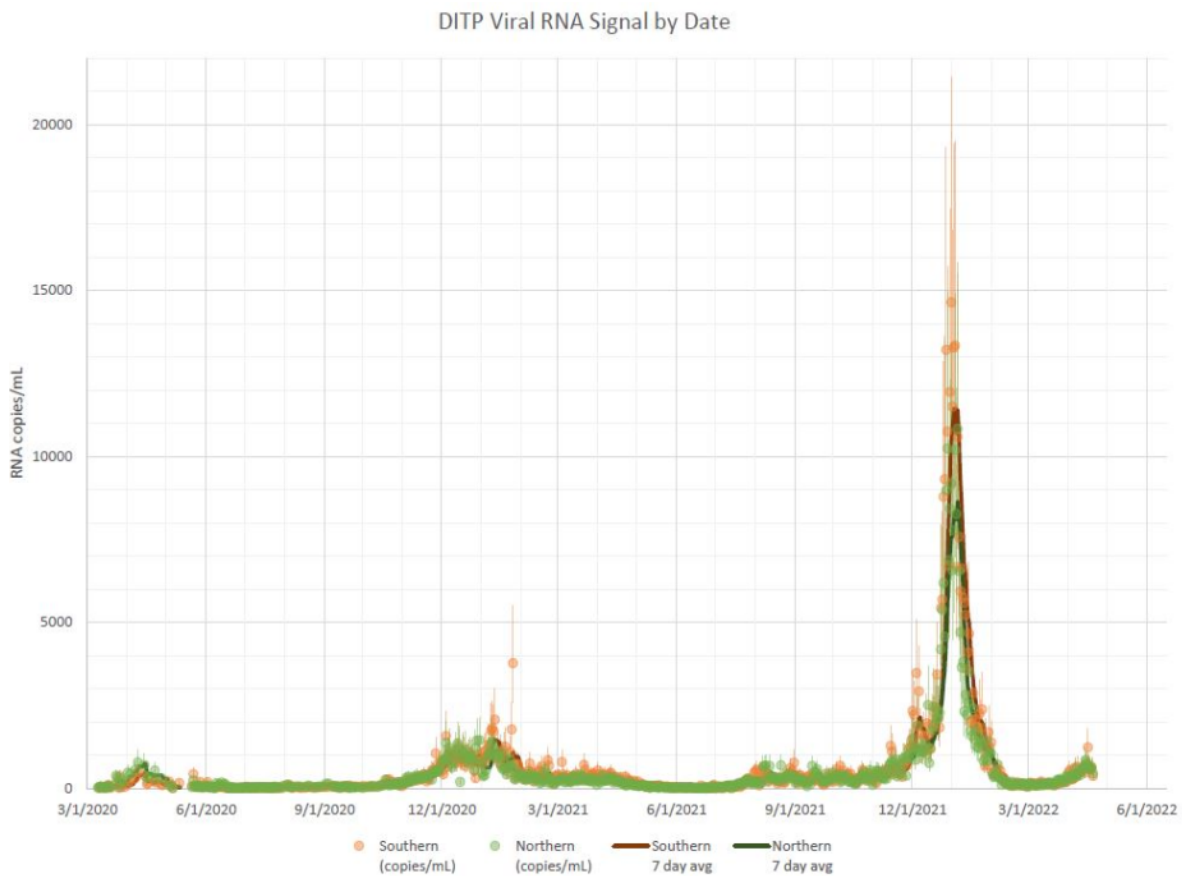
We had 177 confirmed new cases of COVID-19 in Newton over the past seven days from April 14 to 20. That number is right in the middle of the 203 we saw last week and the 154 the week before and brings our cumulative total of confirmed cases in Newton to 13,338.

As of Tuesday, April 19, Newton-Wellesley Hospital is caring for a total of four (4) patients with COVID-19 and none of these patients are being cared for in the Intensive Care Unit. During the most recent surge of COVID-19 cases this past January, Newton-Wellesley Hospital was caring for a peak of 58 patients hospitalized with COVID-19.

Wastewater (i.e., sewage) data collected by the MWRA has been a reliable predictor of the virus during the pandemic and is now one of the most useful tools for understanding the level of COVID-19 in Greater Boston. Samples are collected and analyzed three to seven times a week by Biobot Analytics to detect from human fecal waste the RNA from SARS-CoV-2.

If you go to the MWRA [website](#) you'll notice that North System graph is flattening while the South System graph is still moving slightly upward. Newton is bisected by the MWRA regions, with half in the North System and half in the South. While the data shows increased virus levels, what we are seeing now is nowhere near as high as the levels in the wastewater from January. For example, the most recent seven-day average from the South System on Tuesday shows 675 copies/mL, up from a low of 92 on March 1 but far below the 11,446 on Jan. 3. The North System also showed 675 copies/mL on Tuesday, compared to 101 on March 1 but far below the 8,644 on Jan. 5. (Find this data [here](#).)

Wastewater COVID-19 Tracking



Over the two-week tracking period used by the State from April 4 to 16, the incidence rate and the positivity rate ticked up in Newton. Our positivity rate is 4.0% of the 10,815 tests performed on Newton residents, up from the 3.4% (10,434 tests) reported last week. Our daily incidence rate which measures the number of cases per 100,000 population is 31.9, up from last week's 25.9. Remember, this data is only directionally correct as it does not capture all the positive cases found with at-home rapid antigen tests. (Even though not all at-home antigen tests taken by our residents are reported into the state system, they are playing an important role in identifying the virus so people can isolate and stop the spread. This is a welcome addition to our other risk mitigation strategies of vaccinations, masking and staying home when sick.)

Students at institutions of higher learning in Newton that conduct COVID testing make up 7% of Newton's cases, up slightly from 6% last week.

There is no data from the Newton Public Schools this week due to school vacation week.

For the second week in a row, we lost another Newton neighbor who died with COVID-19. Our cumulative total of Newtonians who died with COVID-19 is now 201 since we reported the first death two years ago in April 2020. COVID-19 continues to bring grief and loss.

### Mask Mandate on Transportation Lifted

Last week a court ruling voided the federal requirement that everyone wear masks on public transportation. This ruling led some airlines, airports, and transit systems

(including the [MBTA](#)) to lift the requirement that passengers or employees wear masks, while others are keeping those requirements in place. If you have a trip planned, check with your airline for their current mask policy.

Whether or not masks are required, passengers may choose to continue to wear a mask if they feel that's the right decision for them or their family. Older adults and anyone with an [underlying health condition](#) that would make COVID-19 infection more serious, such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, or cancer, or anyone who has older family members or family members with health issues, should consider continuing to wear a mask as a precaution against becoming infected and/or spreading the virus. Please also know the [CDC](#) is still recommending that people wear masks on public transportation and while flying.

### COVID Community Level

Newton's Health & Human Services continues to monitor COVID-19 and use all of the tools at their disposal to stay up to date on the transmission of COVID-19 in Newton.

This includes the CDC COVID-19 [County Level Data Tracker](#) and the Massachusetts [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). These data trackers help communities and individuals make decisions based on their local context and their unique needs. This data, in combination with [Newton COVID-19 data](#) and [wastewater data](#), help provide a better understanding of how COVID-19 is impacting our community.

The CDC County Level Data Tracker looks at a combination of three metrics — new COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days, the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients, and total new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days — to determine the COVID-19 community level. The risk levels -- low, medium, or high -- take into account hospital bed usage, hospital admissions, and total number of new COVID cases in an area.

As of last Friday, the CDC moved Suffolk, Middlesex (where Newton is located), and Berkshire Counties in Massachusetts from the low to the medium risk category for COVID-19.

Medium level of transmission means:

- If you are [at high risk for severe illness](#), talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions.
- Stay [up to date](#) with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters.
- [Get tested](#) if you have symptoms.

People may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask.

Find out more about the COVID-19 data in Middlesex County, MA with [COVID-19 Data Tracker](#) and learn more about what you can do to mitigate risk for each level on

the [CDC website](#).

---

## Composting – It's Pretty Easy

Have you been curious about the small green bins at curbs around the City?

These 13-gallon carts are used to collect food scraps from residents in Newton who subscribe for the service with our composting partner, Black Earth Compost. Newton currently has more than 2,500 households



subscribed to this weekly compost curbside service which is on the same day as the City's pickup of trash and recycling.

Nearly 30% of Newton's trash in our big blue bins is food waste – cucumber peels, chicken bones, take-out leftovers, coffee grounds, and more. Food scraps can and should be composted to create dirt that can grow more food, a virtuous cycle. Food waste does not have to be thrown out with the garbage.

Altogether, 8% of global carbon emissions come from food waste. Composting and organics collection plays a key role in keeping valuable materials out of landfills. Simultaneously, compost improves or maintains high quality soil, helps grow healthy plants, reduces the use of fertilizer and pesticides, improves water quality and protects the environment.

You have three options for composting. Compost in your backyard. Drop off food waste for free at Newton's Resource Recovery Center, 115 Rumford Avenue. Sign up for the curbside organics service. Learn more about all three options at [newtonma.gov/composting](https://newtonma.gov/composting).

Many people like the curbside organics subscription service from Black Earth Compost. It costs \$59.99 for six months (i.e., \$10 a month), plus a one-time start-up fee of \$38 to purchase the lockable bin to collect food waste for weekly curbside pick-up by Black Earth. When we reach 5,000 subscribers in Newton, everyone will receive a \$10 price drop to \$49.99 for six months of service.

Interested and want a deal? In honor of Earth Day and International Compost Awareness Week (May 1-7), the cost of a starter kit is 50% off (\$19 savings) starting tomorrow, Friday, April 22 through Saturday, May 7.

Additionally, at the Earth Day Festival happening at City Hall War Memorial Circle from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. this Sunday, April 24, the first 50 people to sign up for Black Earth Compost service at the event will receive a free starter kit and take their bin home the same day.

Click [here](#) for more information and to subscribe to Black Earth Compost service.

A special thank you to Rose Nahmias, a Newton 13-year-old, who wrote us a letter suggesting we hold a "Composting Awareness Day." Her suggestion served as the catalyst for offering free composting starter kits at Earth Day and for the sale price.

I'm a huge fan personally of Black Earth Compost. We have a small stainless steel compost bin with a filter on our kitchen counter. Plus, when we have room, we freeze the food scrap bags from the kitchen counter bin and put them in the Black Earth Compost curbside lockable bin on trash/recycling/compost pickup day.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. Check out Green Newton's **Earth Month Exhibition** at Newton City Hall first floor Gallery. Green Newton invited artists to show pieces that highlight the City's "4 Our Future" climate actions. The artists (Myra Abelson, Arlene Bandes, Marcia Cooper, Marian Dioguardi, Bev Droz, Deb Hiatt, Madeline Lee, Jane Levin, Gene Mackles, Ken Mallory, Carole Robinson, Lisa Sazer, Carol Schein, Joanne Taub and Bruce Wilson) focus on how to Insulate, Upgrade Heating & Cooling to Heat Pumps, Electrify Your Ride, and Go Solar.

*(Photo: Green Newton Youth Leaders, by Marcia Cooper)*

P.P.S. Join me next Tuesday, April 26, for a virtual workshop in honor of **Fair Housing Month**. Hear from attorneys with the Suffolk School of Law Housing Discrimination Testing Program who will examine the history of housing discrimination, highlight current trends, and offer ways to ensure everyone has fair and equal access to housing. The workshop, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., is hosted by the WestMetro HOME Consortium. Register [here](#), and learn more about Fair Housing Month [here](#).



P.P.P.S. Bring your bike, have fun, and learn about safe cycling at the **Newton Bike Rodeo**. Spots are still available for youngsters in grades 2 through 6. Register [here](#) for the Rodeo on Sunday, May 1, at the Newton South High School parking lot, 140 Brandeis Road. (Times range from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. depending on the grade.)

P.P.P.P.S Celebrate **Arbor Day** at a tree planting ceremony. Join us to replace the honey locust that had stood in the front yard of the Jackson Homestead on Washington Street for more than 200 years. The tree

was lost to a storm last year. See what Newton artisans created with wood from the fallen tree at this outdoor event (weather permitting) on the grounds of the Jackson Homestead, 527 Washington St., on Friday, April 29 at 3:00 p.m. Admission is free. [Register here.](#) (Photo: Peter Kronberg, one of the artisans who made a sculpture from the fallen honey locust tree.)



Mayor Ruthanne Fuller | 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459

[Unsubscribe {recipient's email}](#).

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by rf Fuller@newtonma.gov powered by



Try email marketing for free today!