

5-7-21

Dear Winchester & Ashuelot Residents,

More big changes announced this week. Yesterday the Governor informed the public that the statewide Universal Best Practices will begin May 7th. These recommended practices are similar to the past requirements. It is now up to businesses to decide how to operate under the COVID emergency. Why did this happen? The state now has vaccinated about 60% of our population with the first dose and 25% with the second dose. The numbers of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are the lowest they have been since last year. What does this mean? One could assume the pandemic is improving and the country is more control of the virus and that we are safer. Private businesses, cities, and towns can still require that masks be worn. Please check with each place you go to see what their policy is for mask wearing and social distancing. The virus is still here and is making people sick. Many people and places will still only feel safe by wearing a mask. So please respect what is asked of you. The Governor still endorses mask wearing in large groups and public places. So, do not throw your masks away. Masks are still your best defense against the corona virus, besides vaccinations.

Sporting events, amusement parks and other outdoor venues are opening up. Outdoors is a very safe place to be, and you generally will not need a mask. So get out and enjoy, but plan ahead because there may be limited occupancy at many places. Restaurants are open to outdoor dining, Farmers markets, nurseries, racetracks, and ball fields are all open and ready for your return. Go and support your local economy. Also, go take that vacation you couldn’t last year. You and your family deserve it. Please think twice about going into crowded places. If you do, wear a mask.

Vaccinations are free and can be found in many places in our area. Our local Rite Aid now offers vaccines and testing. You do need to call ahead for an appointment. Again, if you suspect you have COVID or in contact with someone who has tested positive, you must self quarantine and get tested.

Schools are back in full swing. Students are back to in person learning 5 days a week. Town elections this year is **May 11th at the school**. The school gym is larger and much safer for groups of people. Covid protocols are in place. Please vote, it is safe!

This will be the last health update unless the pandemic situation takes a downturn. Many thanks to all of you for all your support of each other and working together during this crazy past year. So many individuals, organizations and businesses stepped up to the plate to help those in need. The creativity was amazing. The community coming together during this tough last year is heartwarming and made us all feel more safe and secure when our lives were in an upheaval and at times very scary and overwhelming. Say thanks again to our healthcare workers and all frontline workers. They were truly remarkable!