

## WINTER UPDATE FROM THE HEALTH OFFICE

The groundhog's prediction is for 6 more weeks of winter, but spring IS coming, and with it the beginnings of a return to normalcy! We are already seeing some hopeful signs. Although COVID-19 cases remain high, case counts have recently dropped significantly. Vaccines are beginning to be rolled out around the country. In Newtown, our most vulnerable population (75 years old and up) have already begun to get vaccines. This week Governor Lamont has opened eligibility for vaccines to residents who are 65 and older. The names of staff members who are 65 and over have been entered into the vaccine administration management system (VAMS), and they have received an invitation to make an appointment for a vaccine. All CT residents, age **65 and up**, can now register in VAMS to make an appointment for a vaccine at: [COVID 19 - VAMS Support](#). Every person vaccinated helps to protect us all!

### Travel Advisory

As we approach the holiday weekend, please remember that as a resident of the state of Connecticut, you are bound by Governor Lamont's executive order on travel. This link: [CT Travel Advisory](#), will take you to an extensive explanation of all current travel restrictions. The Newtown school nurses are not involved in enforcing these restrictions. The expectation is that all CT residents will abide by the Governor's order. If you have a question for the nurse related to travel that is not addressed in the CT Travel Advisory, please email Christina Benoit, BSN, RN at [cbenoit@fraserwoods.com](mailto:cbenoit@fraserwoods.com).

### COVID-19 Management at School

Contact tracing is a key part of the mitigation strategies that schools are using to prevent disease transmission. By now, many of you have received a phone call from your school nurse asking that you pick up your child due to an exposure to COVID-19 at school. While we know that this is often inconvenient and frustrating for families, contact tracing remains our best strategy for infection control until vaccines become widely available. We ask for your continued patience and cooperation as we move through what we hope are the last months of this pandemic.

### Masks

The epidemiologists at the Department of Public Health continue to say that the best mask for everyday use is a tightly woven, multilayered mask that completely covers the nose and mouth, fits well to the face and most importantly is comfortable enough to wear all day. Gaiters can be used if they are multi-layer and tightly woven or worn over a disposable mask. Single layer gaiters stretched thin over the face are not effective. Bandanas do not fit the face closely enough to be effective, unless they are worn over a disposable mask. Masks with exhalation valves are not allowed as they are not protective of others. The CDC released new mask information yesterday suggesting double masking for increased protection. Here is the link to the latest information: [CDC - How to Improve Your Mask Protection](#).

### COVID-19 Testing

Our School Based Health Center (SBHC) continues to offer COVID-19 testing by appointment for symptomatic students, staff and their family members. The testing is not available for asymptomatic individuals. The SBHC is administering BINAX rapid tests in a "drive-up" format. Results are available within 15 minutes. Positive rapid test results are a reliable indicator of a positive COVID-19 case. If an individual has symptoms and has a negative result on the rapid test, it is not a reliable result and a PCR test will be done on the same day to confirm the result. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, call Nancy Kettner at 203-270-6114 to schedule an appointment for testing.

As we wait for vaccines to become widely available, it is more important than ever to be vigilant in protecting ourselves and others from the COVID-19 virus and its variants. You have heard it before, but it is truer than ever: avoid gatherings with people outside of your immediate household; wear a mask when outside of your home; keep your distance from others and keep washing your hands.

Stay strong: **WASH UP! MASK UP! BACK UP!**

**Happy Valentine's Day!**  
*Love is the answer.*