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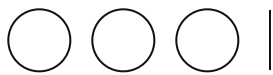
NEWS // CORONAVIRUS IN CONNECTICUT

As positivity rate climbs, CDC ranks CT third worst in nation for COVID cases per capita



Peter Yankowski

Updated: March 30, 2021 9:10 p.m.



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Phlebotomist Warren Dawkins demonstrates drive-thru testing for coronavirus at Murphy Medical Associates in Greenwich, Conn. Monday, March 9, 2020. Murphy Medical Associates is offering drive-thru coronavirus testing at locations in Greenwich, Stamford, and Stratford on Mondays through Fridays from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. Those wishing to be tested must first fill out an online questionnaire and register online for insurance billing, then simply drive to one of the three locations to get swabbed and expect results within 48 to 72 hours.

Tyler Sizemore / Tyler Sizemore

Connecticut's number of COVID-19 cases per capita is among the worst in the nation, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as the state's positivity rate of new tests continues to climb.

On Tuesday, Connecticut reported a daily positivity rate of 5.26 percent — the highest it's been since late January. There was also a net gain of 20 more COVID hospitalizations, increasing the statewide total to 518.

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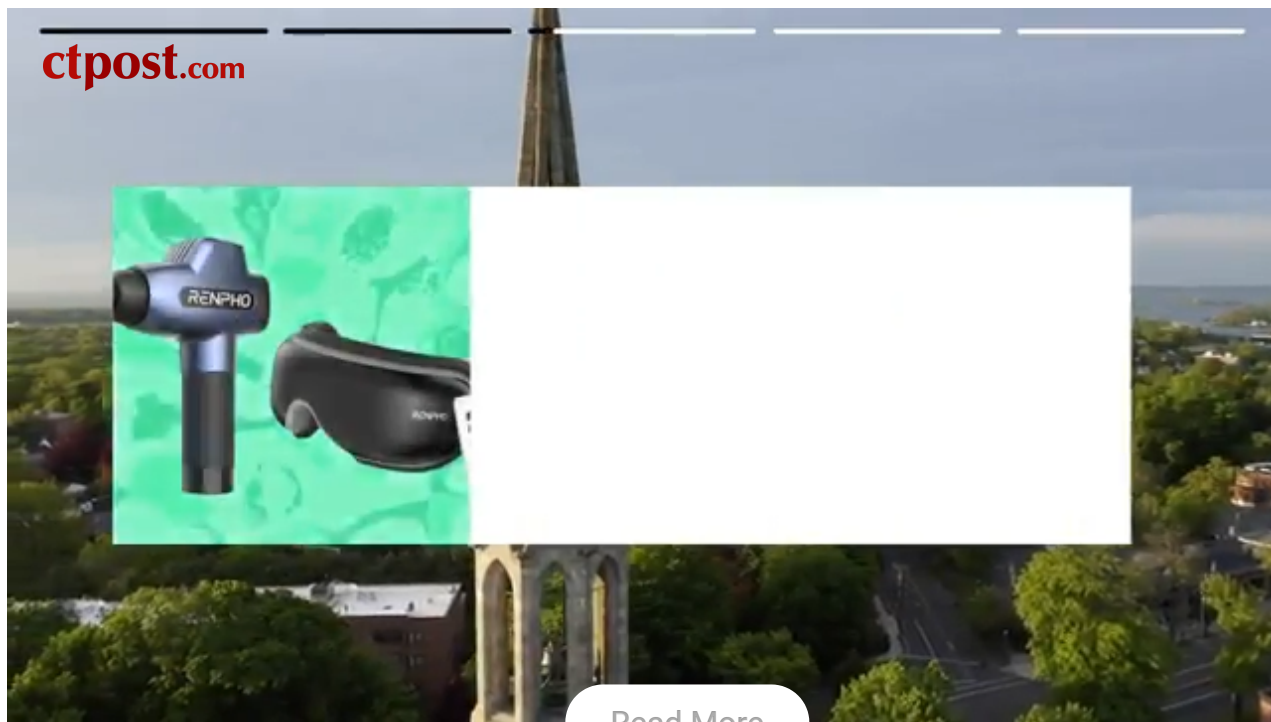
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Despite the uptick in infections, Gov. Ned Lamont has said he does not plan to roll back restrictions on businesses, saying Monday he believes the pace of vaccinations is keeping ahead of the problem.

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With recent infections, Connecticut is now reporting cases at nearly twice the rate per 100,000 people as the nation on the whole over a seven-day average, according to CDC data as of Tuesday.

Connecticut reported a seven-day average of 246 cases per 100,000 people compared with the national average of just over 130.

That ranks Connecticut third among all U.S. states and territories, trailing only Michigan and New Jersey, the data shows.

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Coronavirus in Connecticut

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Connecticut leaders, however, have said it's not fair to compare infection rates with

other states. Lamont's administration says Connecticut tests residents at a higher rate — therefore detecting more infections — than other states.

“In other parts of the country, especially down south, they're doing 20 percent as much testing as we are,” Lamont said Monday. “So their number of cases per 100,000 look a lot lower than they are just 'cause of the testing differential.”

As infections and hospitalizations climb, Connecticut health officials are warning of another COVID surge.

In an alert issued over the weekend, the state Department of Public Health noted the age group with the highest case rates are those 20-29 years old, and urged college students not to travel for spring break.

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DPH noted many communities that had seen cases decline are now again considered “red alert” municipalities under the state's color-coded map tracking case rates.

The alert also noted there are several variants of the virus circulating in

Connecticut, particularly the B.1.1.7 strain first detected in the U.K.

Health officials believe that variant, suspected to be more transmissible and deadly, now comprises around 40 percent of new COVID-19 cases in Connecticut.

“The greater infectiousness of the B.1.1.7 variant very likely is contributing to the current spike, as is ‘COVID-fatigue’ when folks let their guards down and go to a party or event that they might have avoided when rates were higher, for example,” said Dr. Sten Vermund, dean at the Yale School of Public Health.

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He said increasing vaccinations are mitigating the spike, but the state will need to use every available shot to reach herd immunity— most likely when about 80 percent of the population is vaccinated.

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As of Tuesday, about 35 percent of Connecticut's population had received one dose, according to the CDC, trailing only New Mexico and the U.S. territory of the Republic of Palau.

That comes as Connecticut is set to open vaccinations up to anyone 16 and older on Thursday. The move puts the state one month ahead of President Joe Biden's promise to have the vaccine open to all adults by May 1.

"Pockets of persons who do not access vaccines for one reason or another may continue to fuel transmission and disease, so making vaccines available to all and doing health education outreach to answer all questions and reassure on issues that are emerging from vaccine hesitant sources are critical," Vermund said.

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Along with making shots available to all adults Thursday, the Lamont administration has pledged to accelerate vaccinations for some people with high-risk medical conditions. The state has identified five medical conditions on the CDC list for providers to prioritize.

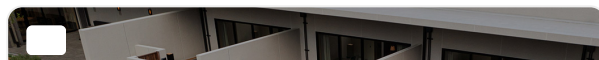
The state also plans to quickly vaccinate patients at Connecticut Children's Medical Center and Yale New Haven Children's Hospital. The state Department of Developmental Services is also planning about 20 clinics to inoculate Connecticut's population of about 9,000 people with developmental or intellectual disabilities.

But one advocacy group argued that plan discriminates against those with complicated disabilities.

"Whether or not individuals with disabilities can receive a potentially life-saving vaccine should not depend on which high-risk disability or medical condition they have, where they live, which hospital's jurisdiction they fall under, or the whim of an administrator," said Deborah Dorfman, executive director of Disability Rights Connecticut, a nonprofit advocacy organization.

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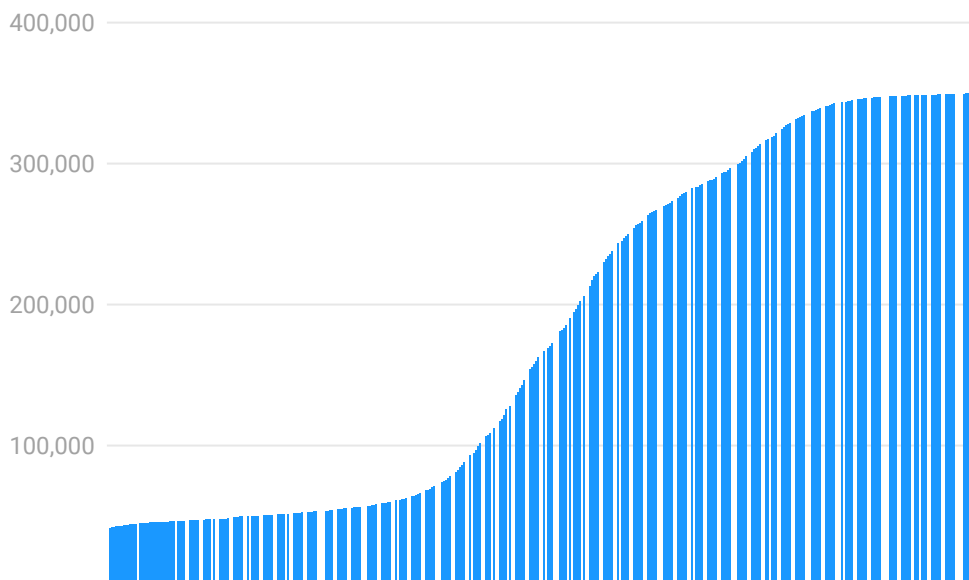
Dorfman compared the state’s plan with The Hunger Games, and noted it contradicts guidance from the CDC.

The group filed an updated complaint Tuesday with the federal Department of Health and Human Services’ Office for Civil Rights, calling for the agency to require Connecticut’s plan to be revised.

The governor’s office declined to comment on the complaint

COVID-19 cases and deaths in Connecticut

Total cases



Jul 2020 Oct Jan 2021 Apr Jul

The first confirmed cases of the coronavirus connected with Connecticut were reported on March 6 and 7 when two hospital employees who are New York residents were diagnosed with the illness. On March 8, a Wilton man who had recently returned from a business trip to California was confirmed as Connecticut's first coronavirus case. Since then, new cases have been confirmed at an increasing rate.

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