



COVID-19 Situation Update for Watauga County October 16, 2020

This document is intended to provide a regular update on the local response to COVID-19 in our communities and timely, trended data related to COVID-19. This report will be published on Fridays.

Situation Update

For the week of October 4-10 (graphs below), small decreases occurred in active and quarantined cases. These decreases mean we must not let up on the actions we can take to slow the spread in our community.

Our case trends have continued to increase with the largest percentage of cases in the 18-24 old age group.

We urge all of our community partners and the broader public to commit to prevention measures like wearing face coverings, keeping social distance, and frequent handwashing so we can slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

We are continuing to see the same trend with cases mostly exposed due to close contact with others through living or working closely with others or attending social gatherings. Small gatherings with people outside of immediate household members has contributed to additional exposures. In addition, sports activities not related with school activities have been associated with several cases among youth and adults.

“We realize that people are tired and growing weary in this journey, but we cannot stop our efforts aimed at preventing the spread of this virus. We have seen more complacency in lack of mask wearing and small group gatherings that is leading to exposure and severe illness that can be prevented with everyone’s help,” stated Jennifer Greene, Health Director, AppHealthCare.

Key Points

- You may notice a discrepancy between our local data dashboard and the [NC Department of Health & Human Services data dashboard](#). We have to manually enter antigen test results and due to the large increase in antigen tests being performed in Watauga County, there is a delay in those results showing up on the state database.
- We continue case investigation and contact tracing efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19. If you receive a call from a member of our case investigation or contact tracing team, we urge you to cooperate and provide information that will help us conduct response efforts. You may receive a call from (844) 628-7223 or (828) 264-4995. It may also show up as “NC Outreach” or

“Contact Tracing.” Your cell phone carrier may flag the call as spam. It is so important to answer the call of a contact tracer. It is a key tool in slowing the spread of this virus.

- As we approach Halloween, NC DHHS has developed guidance for activities that are lower risk and those that should be avoided. The guidance can be found [here](#).
- We are continuing to work closely with our University partners and provide public health guidance and recommendations. Every Monday through Friday, we meet with App State to review confirmed cases and outline a plan of action to care for those students who need to be in isolation or quarantine. There are protocols in place to continue surveillance of cases to identify response testing needed. Collaboration continues on the weekends between App State and the AppHealthCare case investigation team. [App State has a dedicated website](#) that highlights guidance, regular updates and data for the university community.
- We are continuing to work with [Watauga County Schools](#) and provide public health information to inform their decisions about school operations.
- We are continuing to work to increase testing opportunities for the community. Beginning next week, OptumServe will be offering expanded testing opportunities on-site at the Watauga Health Department Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 8:30am-5pm and Wednesday 9:30am-6:30pm. With Optum offering testing at the health department, this will allow our staff to offer additional testing opportunities for various community locations like off-campus apartment complexes. We will be changing our registration process for Watauga so that individuals seeking a test will register through an OptumServe website link. Additional communications will be forthcoming.
- PPE (personal protective equipment) levels remain stable in most areas.
- Turnaround times for testing have improved with most tests resulting around 2-4 days. NC DHHS now provides data on testing turnaround times. This data is updated daily and can be found [here](#).
- We have posted additional positions to assist with COVID-19 response efforts to respond to the increased demand due to increased cases. More information about those positions can be found [here](#).
- Outreach continues to be an important part of our collective community strategy to address COVID-19. Regular meetings take place with community partners to discuss the current situation in the county, strategize areas for growth and improvement and provide a time for questions and answers.

Outbreaks & Clusters

Data is provided for outbreaks and clusters that are active and ongoing. The number of cases for outbreaks and clusters are current as of each Thursday at 9:00am. The case counts vary day by day as new cases are identified and as cases are moved in and out of isolation. This data may not match other reported data since this is a point in time. As we conduct outbreak and case investigations, the numbers included in this report are subject to change. For a current case count, visit the [AppHealthCare data dashboard](#), which is updated daily by noon.

Based on additional clarification from NC DHHS of documenting and reporting clusters, we have identified and added clusters in off-campus apartments to the cluster report after clarifying cluster

linkages among Appalachian State students with NC DHHS. A meeting with property managers was organized by Appalachian State University this week to talk about prevention, enforcement, public health data, and offer free testing at off campus locations. University Highlands was the first location willing to welcome public health staff this past week to offer free testing. We are grateful for their partnership and that of the other property managers to allow public health to provide this free service for their tenants.

An outbreak is defined as two or more laboratory confirmed cases. A cluster is defined as a minimum of five cases with illness onsets or initial positive results within a 14-day period and plausible epidemiologic linkage between cases. An outbreak or cluster is considered over if 28 days have passed after the latest date of symptom onset in a symptomatic person or first date of specimen collection from the most recent asymptomatic person, whichever is later. Additional information on the [definitions of outbreaks and clusters](#) is provided by the North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services.

Active Outbreaks & Clusters				
<i>Data is current as of Thursday, October 15th, 9:00am</i>				
Facility or Setting Type	Facility or Setting Name	Active Cases	Cumulative Cases	Last Positive Result
Long Term Care Facility	Glenbridge Health & Rehab	1 staff	10 staff 46 residents 13 deaths	10/01/2020
Long Term Care Facility	Foley Center	2 staff 1 resident	2 staff 1 resident	10/15/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Wrestling	0	13	9/23/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Thunder Hill Residence Hall	6	29	10/10/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Kappa Delta Sorority	0	10	9/24/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Alpha Delta Pi Sorority	0	11	10/10/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Raven Rocks Residence Hall	1	16	10/10/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Football	2	68	10/07/2020

Institute of Higher Education	App State White Residence Hall	0	8	10/5/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Eggers Residence Hall	2	11	10/12/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Summit Residence Hall	1	8	10/8/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Living Learning Center Residence Hall	0	5	9/27/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Volleyball Team	0	5	9/28/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Kappa Alpha Fraternity	0	10	9/25/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Delta Sigma Phi Fraternity	0	14	9/28/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Hoey Residence Hall	2	11	10/12/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Frank Residence Hall	0	7	10/2/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Gardner Residence Hall	2	10	10/7/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Coltrane Residence Hall	0	5	10/5/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Alpha Phi Sorority*	1	9	10/14/2020
Institute of Higher Education	Doughton Hall	1	6	10/12/2020
Institute of Higher Education	East Hall	2	6	10/07/2020
Institute of Higher Education	Lovill Hall	1	7	10/07/2020

Institute of Higher Education	Mountaineer Hall	2	5	10/12/2020
Institute of Higher Education	Newland Hall	3	7	10/11/2020
Residential Complex	Cottages of Boone	2	53	10/12/2020
Residential Complex	University Highlands	3	25	10/09/2020
Residential Complex	Daniel Boone Condominiums	0	10	10/09/2020
Residential Complex	Highland Crossing	0	8	10/05/2020
Residential Complex	Standard at Boone	4	22	10/10/2020
Residential Complex	Mountaineer Village	2	11	10/07/2020
Residential Complex	Fairfield Apartments	0	7	10/10/2020
Residential Complex	East Village Apartments	2	7	10/18/2020

**This data for this cluster is effective as of October 17.*

Routine testing continues through App State Athletics to continue identifying early any positive cases. In addition, App State Student Health Service provides testing for students each weekday. The university is offering free COVID-19 tests for App State students, faculty and staff at “pop-up” testing events every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. All events take place from noon - 5 p.m. at the Rivers Street Parking Deck. No appointments required but you will be asked for your App State ID and other identifying information. [App State has a dedicated website](#) that has guidance, regular updates and data for the Appalachian community.

Mitigation and Response Efforts

- Ongoing testing continues to monitor the health of residents in skilled nursing facilities
- Educational outreach on COVID-19 prevention with these facilities
- Positive cases are separated from others to allow for safe isolation
- Ongoing daily health monitoring is occurring at the facilities
- Monitoring of positive cases continues with public health staff

- App State and AppHealthCare review cases daily to ensure that staff and students get the support they need to safely isolate or quarantine and to support contact tracing efforts by public health staff
- Ongoing messaging continues from App State to campus about prevention measures and enforcement
- App State is offering on-campus students the ability to voluntarily opt-out of their housing contracts if they want to return to their hometowns, and is implementing mandatory, large-scale testing in residence halls with active clusters.

Demographic Data from NC DHHS as of October 16th

NC DHHS updates this data daily and can be found on [NC DHHS's website](#).

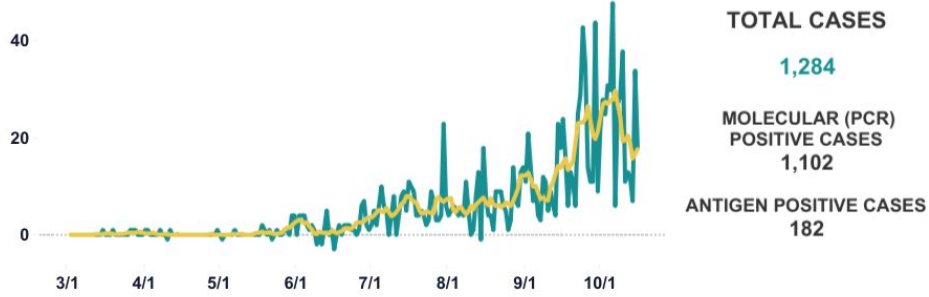
Daily Cases



Top Graph - Select By:

- CASES by Date Reported
- CASES by Date of Specimen Collection
- DEATHS by Date of Death

Is Watauga County seeing a downward trajectory over 14 days, or sustained leveling in new cases?



Molecular (PCR) positive cases represent confirmed cases, and antigen positive cases represent probable cases of COVID-19, in accordance with CDC case classification guidelines. The terms "confirmed" and "probable" are used nationally to standardize case classifications for public health surveillance but should not be used to interpret the utility or validity of any laboratory test type.

Demographic Data - Cases

Select county:
Watauga County

Watauga County Cases

1,284

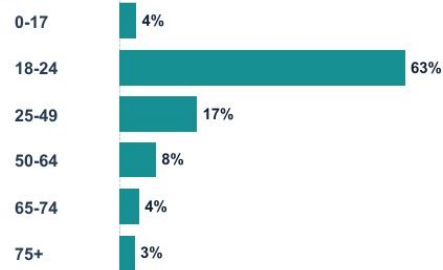
Select demographic metric:

- CASES
- DEATHS

For demographic groups where the county has fewer than five cases and the county has a population of fewer than 500 for that demographic, then that data is suppressed for privacy and the graph for that demographic won't appear. For example, if a county has fewer than five cases in people 18-24 years old and the county population has less than 500 people who are 18-24 years old based on census data, then the age graph will not appear for that county. Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

By Race

By Age



By Ethnicity

By Gender

Missing Demographic Data



Race	303
Ethnicity	590
Age	1
Gender	25

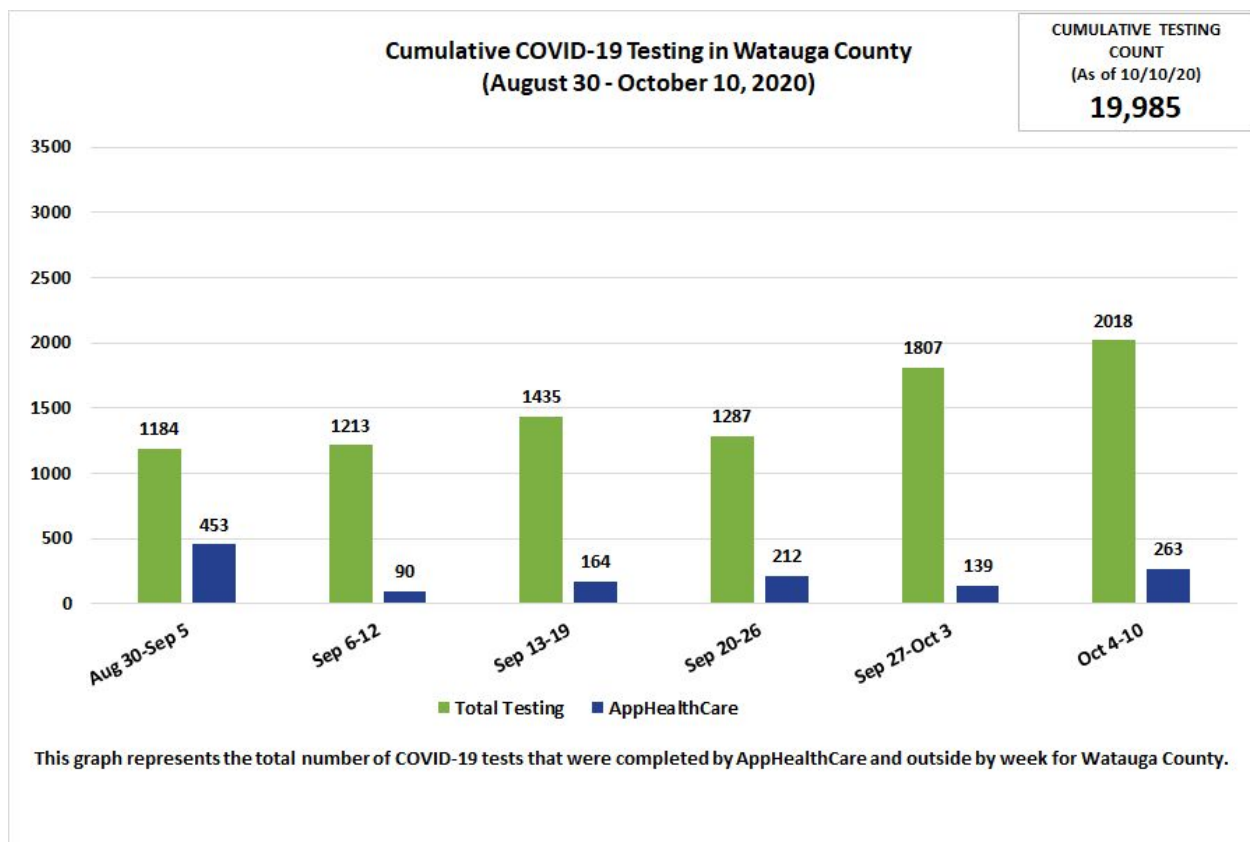
October 16, 2020

Data for Watauga County

An important note about data context: The graphs below show the available data. Please carefully read the descriptions below the graph to understand the data limitations. The most current data is available on the [AppHealthCare dashboard](#), as the data below is past data trended.

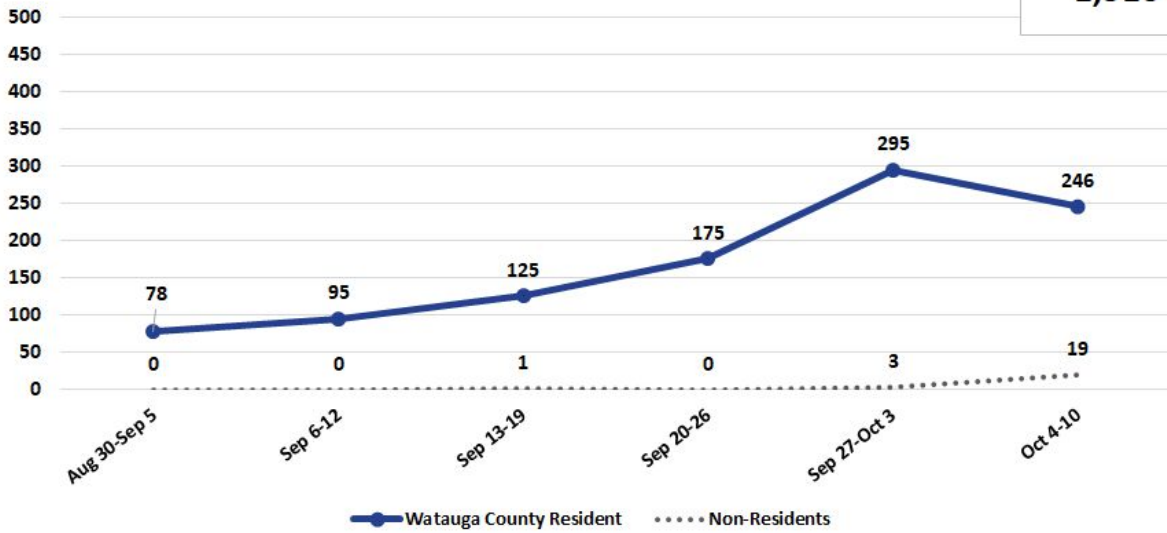
Important Disclaimer About Data

It is imperative that this report and the data contained within is understood in the appropriate context. Please, if you use this report, please be certain that the information included within is shared within the appropriate context. Doing otherwise may be damaging to the public health response efforts. There are multiple factors involved in addressing this virus, including compliance with public health control measures implemented by the local health director and referenced in NC GS 130A. These measures are imperative for limiting the spread of COVID-19. **AppHealthCare strongly advises that when data is shared for the purposes of educating the public or informing policy decisions, it should come directly from NC DHHS or AppHealthCare as it is presented with appropriate context from those directly involved in public health response.**



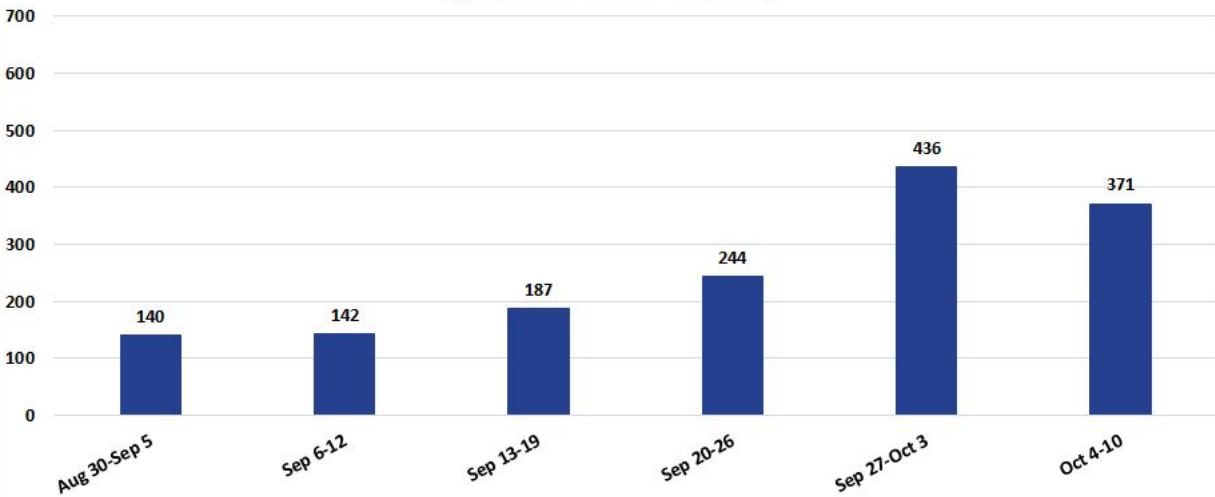
**Cumulative Case Count by Week in Watauga County
(August 30 - October 10, 2020)**

CUMULATIVE CASE
COUNT
(As of 10/10/20)
1,516



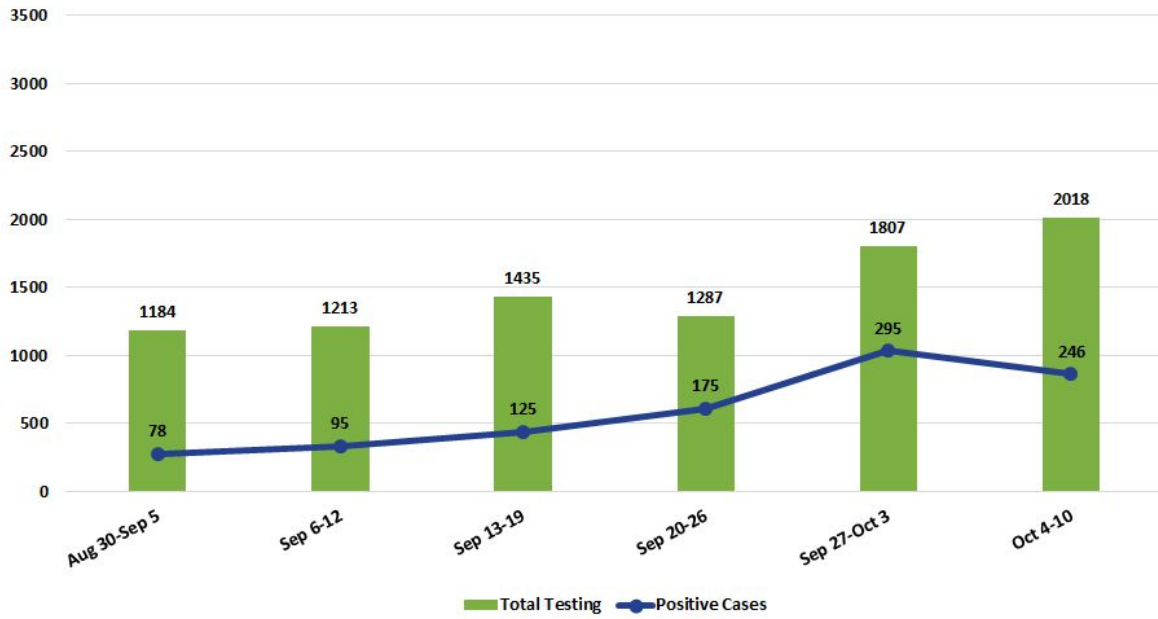
The solid navy blue line in this graph represents the number of positive COVID-19 cases among Watauga County residents by week. This graph also shows the number of non-residents that have tested positive for COVID-19 but reside outside Watauga County.

**Number of Active Positive Cases by Week in Watauga County
(August 30 - October 10, 2020)**



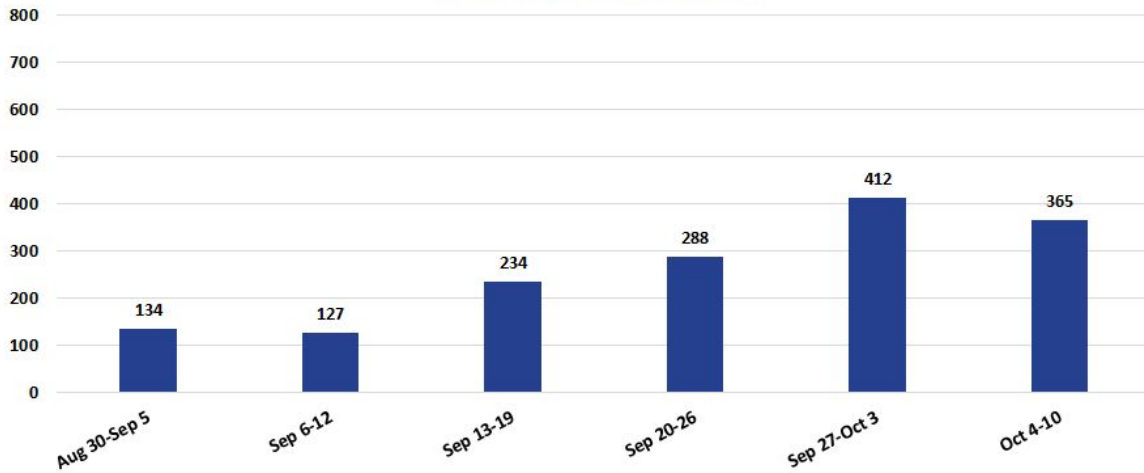
This graph represents the number of active COVID-19 positive cases by week in Watauga County. A positive COVID-19 case is considered active for a total of ten days after the initial positive test result.

**Total Weekly Tests Reported vs. Weekly Positive Case Count in Watauga County
(August 30 - October 10, 2020)**



This graph represents the number of COVID-19 positive cases by week compared to the total number of reported tests that were completed by AppHealthCare and outside agencies each week.

**Number of People Being Actively Monitored by Week in Watauga County
(August 30 - October 10, 2020)**



This graph represents the total number of Watauga County residents that AppHealthCare staff have monitored due to being exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case. Individuals are notified and asked to quarantine and monitor for symptoms for fourteen days.

Additional data can be found on [AppHealthCare's data dashboard](#). This data is updated each day by 8pm.

Additional Data and Information from NC Department of Health & Human Services

- **Zip Code Data** - NC DHHS publishes data for confirmed cases by zip code for the state. The map and data can be found [here](#).
- **Outbreak Data & Information** - This data is broken down by type of congregate setting like a nursing home, residential care facility, correctional facility, or a congregate working setting. The map by county and report can be found [here](#).
- **Hospitalizations** - More detailed data around hospitalizations, ventilators and bed capacity is now available by regions and can be found [here](#). Our district counties are in the Triad Healthcare Preparedness Coalition.

Key Messages

- **Show Your Love!** This multi-county communication campaign focuses on showing your love to yourself, others around you and the community. Posters and social media graphics for the 3Ws are now available on our website in both English and Spanish. Download them [here](#).
- Practice the 3Ws if you have to leave your house - **Wear** a cloth face covering, **Wash** your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer and **Wait** 6 feet from others.
- Regularly clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces like doorknobs, handles, light switches, countertops, etc.
- If you are sick, please stay home except to receive medical care.
- If you are at higher risk for severe illness due to COVID-19, we encourage you to stay at home to the greatest extent possible to decrease your chance of infection.



Testing

If you meet any of the criteria listed below, we encourage you to be tested for COVID-19. You can call your healthcare provider or AppHealthCare. You should be tested if:

- You believe you have symptoms of COVID-19,
- You have no symptoms and you are at higher risk for severe illness (you are 65 or older, you have an underlying health condition or chronic condition), or have been in close contact with someone who is known to have a positive result,
- You are someone working in a frontline role or essential business where social distancing is hard to maintain,
- You are a first responder, law enforcement officer, fire department staff member, or healthcare staff member,

- You live in or work in a facility where social distancing is hard to maintain, like congregate living, healthcare facilities or home care.
- You are part of a historically marginalized population who may be at higher risk for exposure.
- You have attended protests, rallies, or other mass gatherings where you could have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or could have exposed others because it may have been difficult to practice social distancing.

What should you do while waiting for test results? What if the test is negative or positive?

Answers for those questions, including prevention measures and home care if someone is sick are included in NC DHHS guidance [here](#).

NC DHHS has tools for the public including a website to [Check Symptoms](#) and [Find My Testing Place](#). AppHealthCare does not require someone to have symptoms to be tested.

Alleghany (336) 372-5641 | Ashe (336) 246-9449 | Watauga (828) 264-4995

AppHealthCare COVID-19 Hotline (828) 795-1970

General COVID-19 Questions: preparedness@apphealth.com

Media inquiries: media@apphealth.com

www.AppHealthCare.com and follow us on Facebook & Twitter

