COVID-19 Situation Update for Ashe County

December 18, 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.

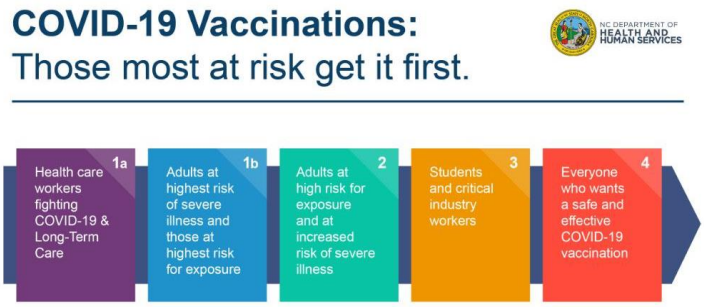
Due to the Christmas Holiday next week, we will not publish a weekly update on December 25th. The next situation update will be published Thursday, December 31st.

"We are working closely with state and local partners as we prepare for vaccine distribution locally. We are expecting to receive our first shipment of COVID-19 vaccine early next week and will prioritize those agencies and individuals who qualify in Phase 1a due to their higher risk of COVID-19 exposure. This ensures those who are at most risk get the vaccine first. Supplies will be limited at first but will increase in the coming months," stated Jennifer Greene, Health Director, AppHealthCare.

Key Points

Vaccinating Makes Everyone Safer - COVID-19 Vaccine Update

This week we were notified our first shipment of COVID-19 vaccine should arrive early next week. We are expecting to receive 600 Moderna doses for Watauga, 300 for Ashe and 100 for Alleghany. Our local hospitals are also expecting vaccine shipment next week as well.



Those who are at most risk will receive the vaccine first and it will be offered in phases. The first phase (Phase 1a) will include healthcare workers who are at high risk of COVID-19 exposure and long term care facility staff and residents which includes skilled nursing facilities, and adult, family and group homes. We are currently in the process of contacting and communicating with Phase 1a agencies and individuals to gather basic information that will be used to coordinate and ensure we have a comprehensive list of those who qualify for the vaccine in this current phase.

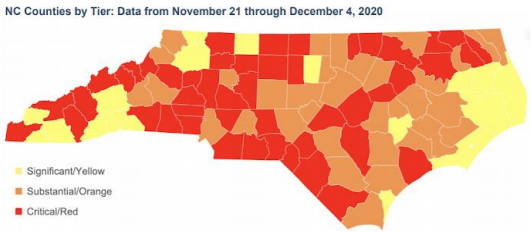
The vaccine will be offered free of charge to everyone whether or not you have health insurance. To learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit NC DHHS's website here.

Cases increasing, would like to see a decreasing trend
For the week of December 6-12 (graphs below), there were increases in active cases and those in quarantine and the trend is going in the wrong direction.

Hospitalizations
We want to monitor this data point very closely because it is important we have hospital capacity for those who may need hospital care for things like a heart attack, stroke, car accident, etc.

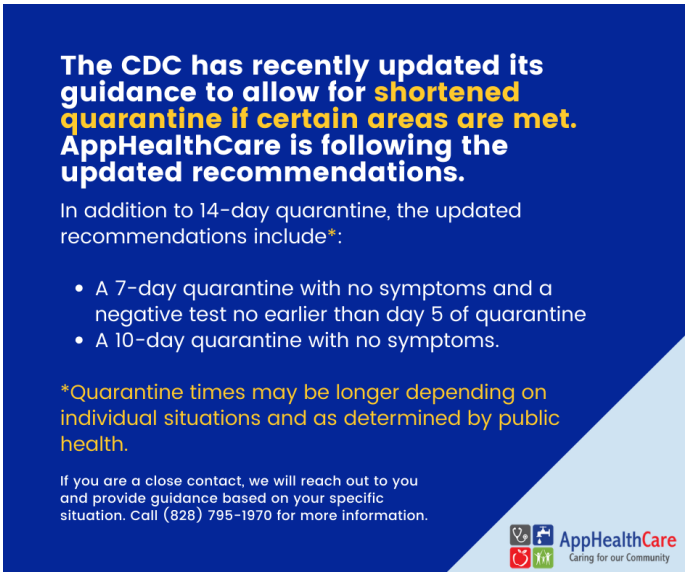
"*As COVID-19 continues to impact our neighbors and surrounding counties, we encourage everyone to do their part to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a mask, washing their hands, and social distancing whenever possible. The safety and well-being of our community is our top priority. We have protocols in place to ensure that we are able to meet the needs of our patients and our community.*"
- statement from Ashe Memorial Hospital

NC DHHS County Alert System Notes Significant Community Spread for Ashe County
In the latest update, Ashe County remains **ORANGE** which notes substantial community spread. This system outlines actions we can take to lessen the impact and spread in our community. You can read more about the County Alert System on NC DHHS's website.



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.

Updated Quarantine Guidance
Quarantine times for close contacts to a positive case can now be shortened to 7 or 10 days if certain areas are met (based on CDC guidance). It is important to note, quarantine times may be longer depending on individual situations and public health risk.



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) levels remain stable in most areas.

Testing

If you have COVID-19 symptoms or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, we recommend you be tested. You can check your symptoms and determine if testing is needed. To find a testing site near you, visit NC DHHS's Find My Testing Place.

Turnaround Times for Testing remains between 2 and 4 days. NC DHHS provides data on testing turnaround times. This data is updated daily and can be found here.

Free COVID-19 Testing at AppHealthCare. Due to the Christmas Holiday next week and prioritizing vaccine distribution, we will only be offering testing on Monday, December 21st with appointments beginning at 9:30am. Please do not just show up for testing. We request that you schedule an appointment through our website or by calling our COVID-19 Call Center at (828) 795-1970.

Testing is also offered by appointment at Mountain Family Care Center (336) 846-6322 (located on the campus of Ashe Memorial Hospital), CVS Pharmacy in West Jefferson, Ashe Pediatrics and other local healthcare providers may offer testing as well.

Guidance Documents to Prevent & Slow the Spread

Tips for Holiday & Private Social Gatherings

As we continue through the Holiday season, we encourage everyone to be mindful of the fact that this virus is still with us and there are actions we can all take to avoid and lessen our exposure and a potential spike that could overwhelm our healthcare system. If you will be hosting or attending an event, NC DHHS has compiled some tips for gathering safely and some guidance for private social gatherings.

Active Outbreaks and 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 data included in this report are subject to change. For a current case count, visit the AppHealthCare data dashboard, which is updated daily by noon.

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.

NC DHHS also provides regularly updated information on outbreaks and clusters.

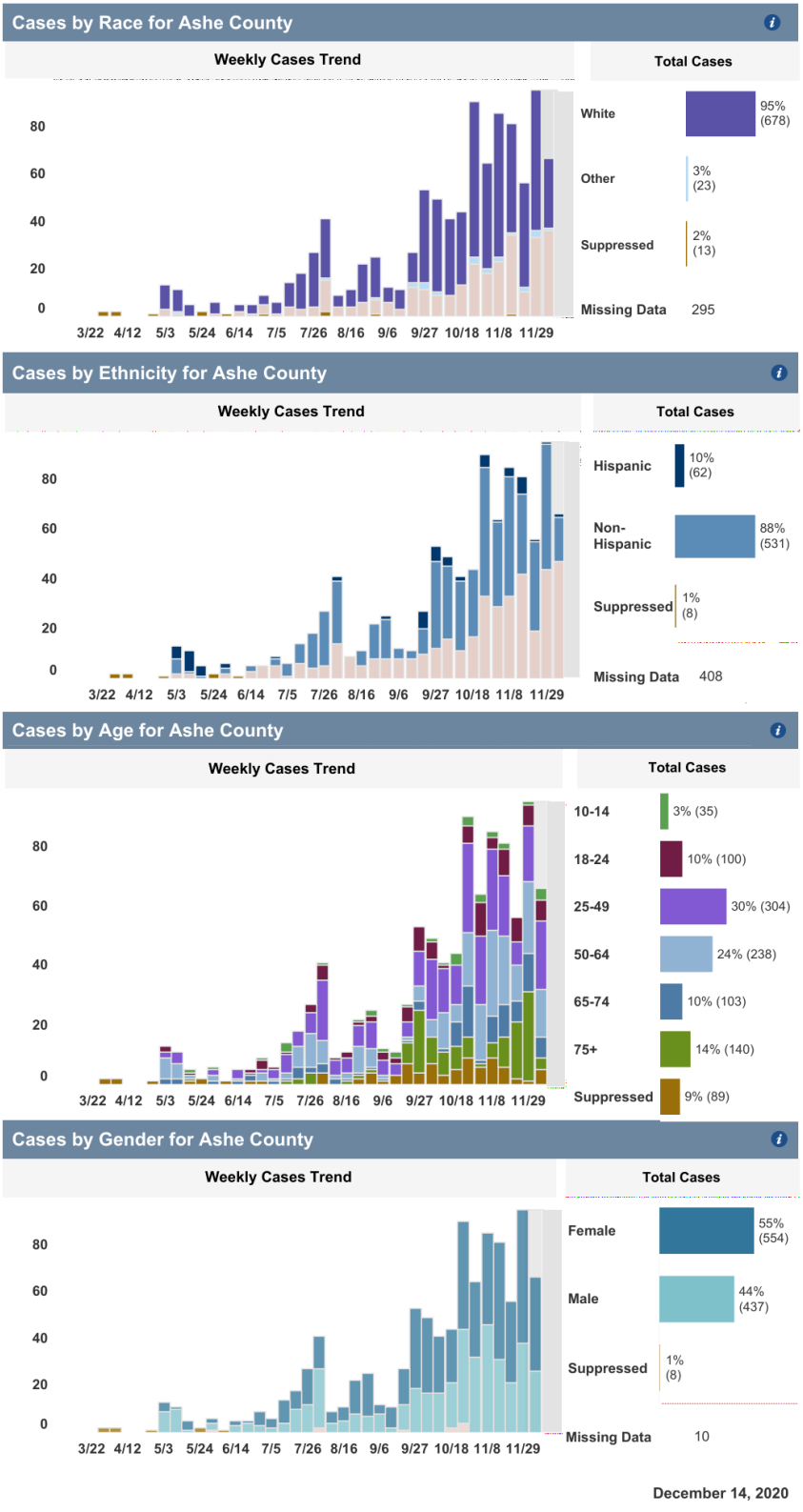
Active Outbreaks & Clusters *Data is current as of Thursday, December 17, 9:00am*				
Facility or Setting Type	**Facility or Setting Name**	**Active Cases**	**Cumulative Cases**	**Last Positive Result**
Long Term Care Facility	Margate Health & Rehab	9 staff 6 residents	50 staff 87 residents 13 deaths	12/10/2020

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

Demographic Data from NC DHHS as of December 14th

NC DHHS updates this data daily and can be found on NC DHHS's website.

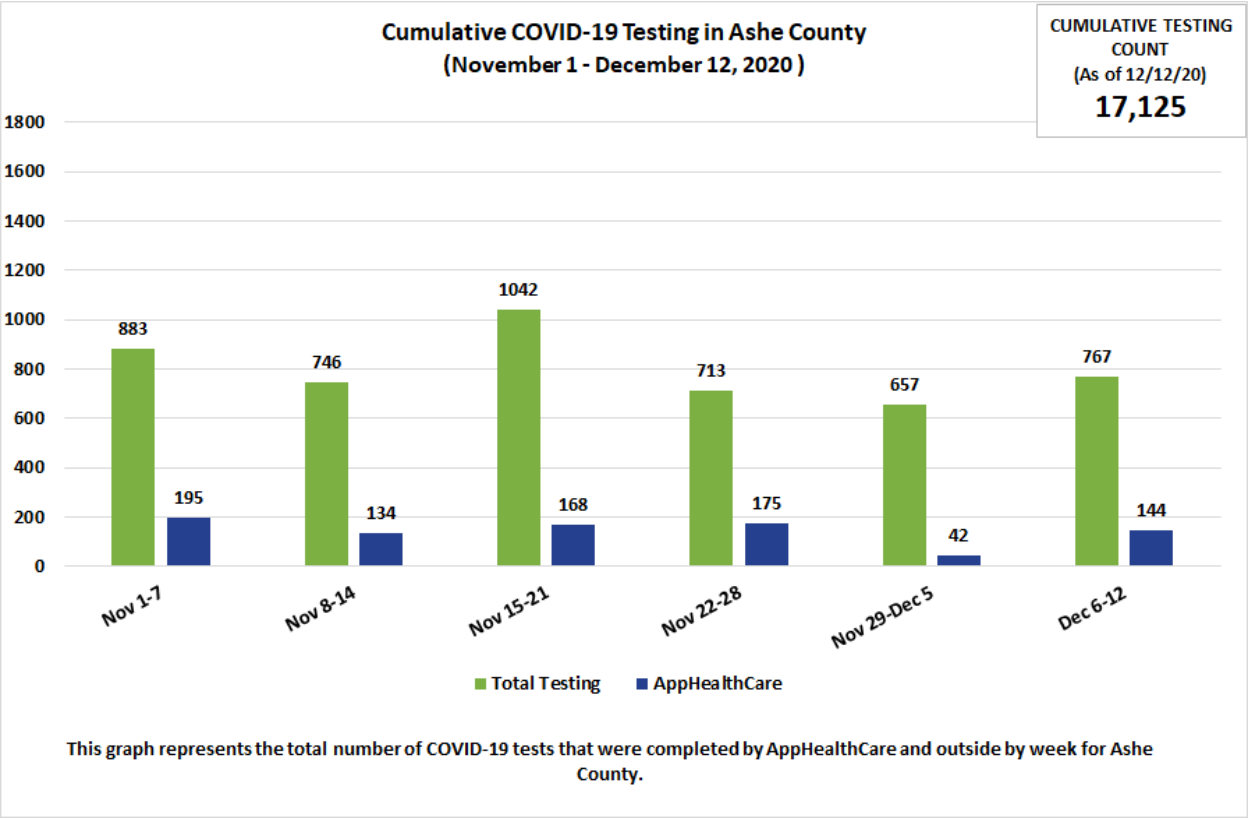


Data for Ashe County

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.

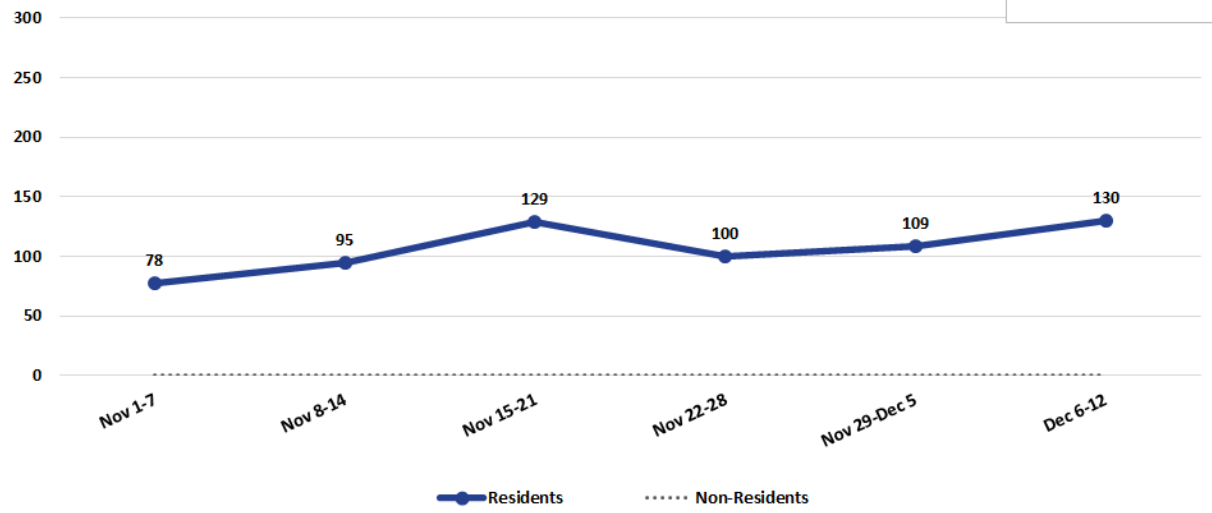
Important Disclaimer About Data

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.***



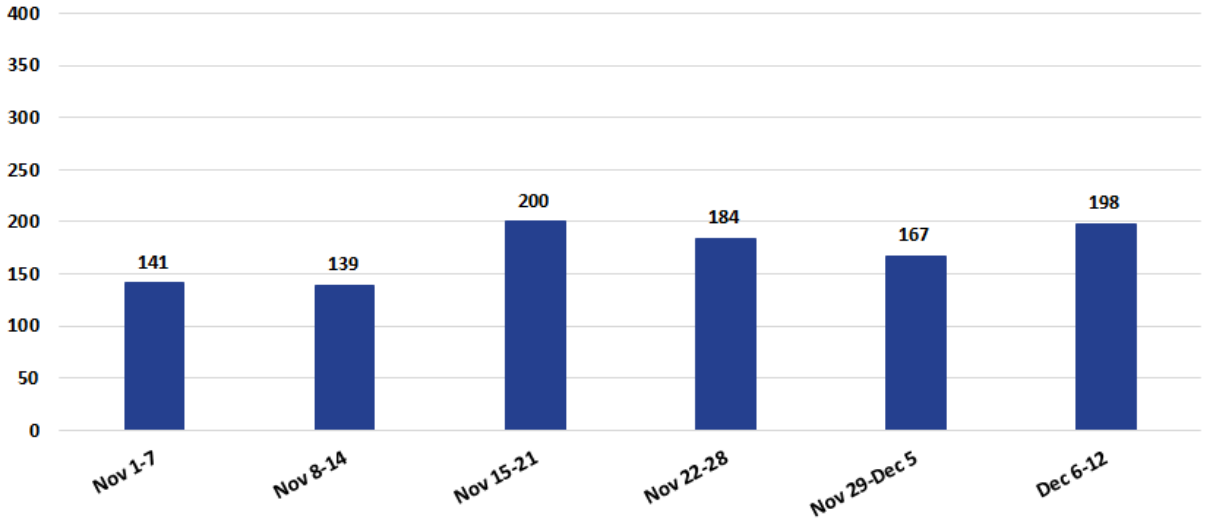
Cumulative Case Count by Week in Ashe County
(November 1 - December 12, 2020)

CUMULATIVE CASE COUNT
(As of 12/12/20)
1,181

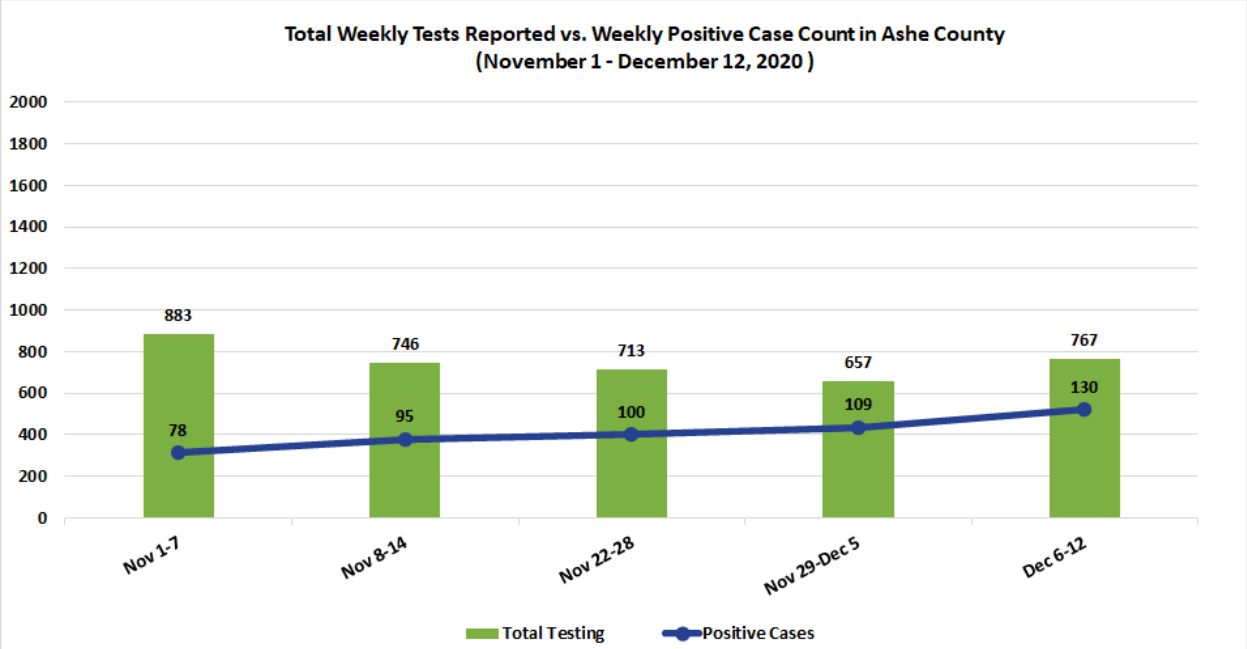


The solid navy blue line in this graph represents the number of positive COVID-19 cases among Ashe County residents by week. This graph also shows the number of non-residents that have tested positive for COVID-19 but reside in another county.

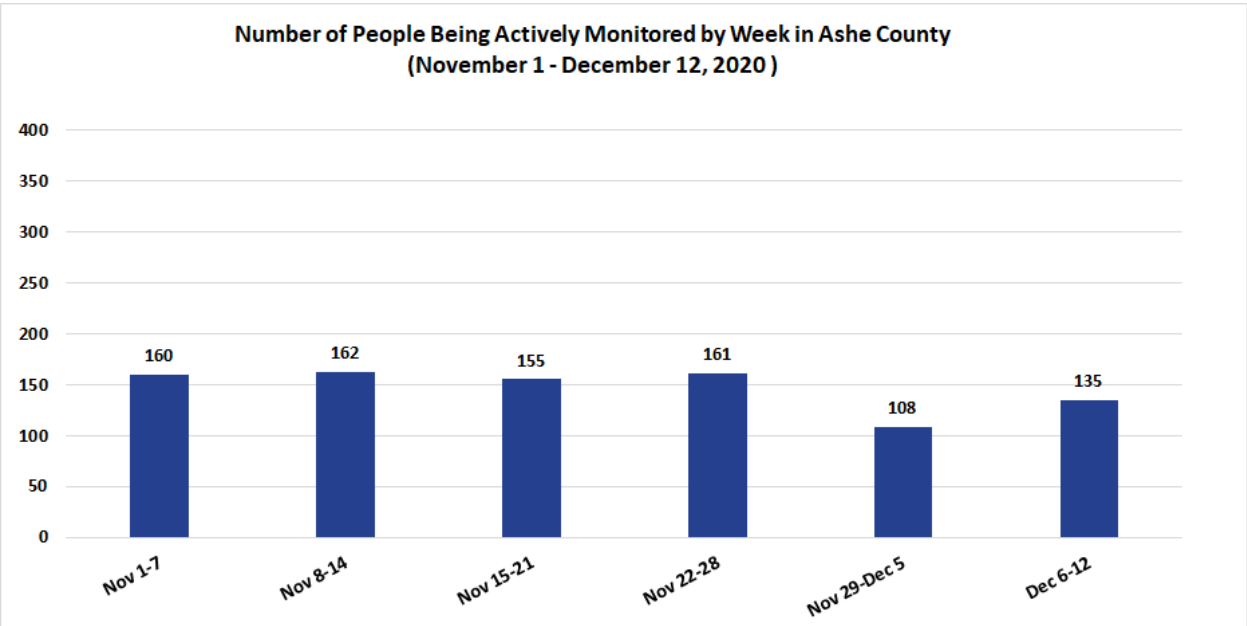
Number of Active Positive Cases by Week in Ashe County
(November 1 - December 12, 2020)



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



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



This graph represents the total number of Ashe 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 around noon.

Alleghany (336) 372-5641 | Ashe (336) 246-9449 | Watauga (828) 264-4995
AppHealthCare COVID-19 Call Center (828) 795-1970
General COVID-19 Questions: preparedness@apphealth.com
Media inquiries: media@apphealth.com
www.AppHealthCare.com and follow us on Facebook & Twitter

AppHealthCare
Caring for our Community