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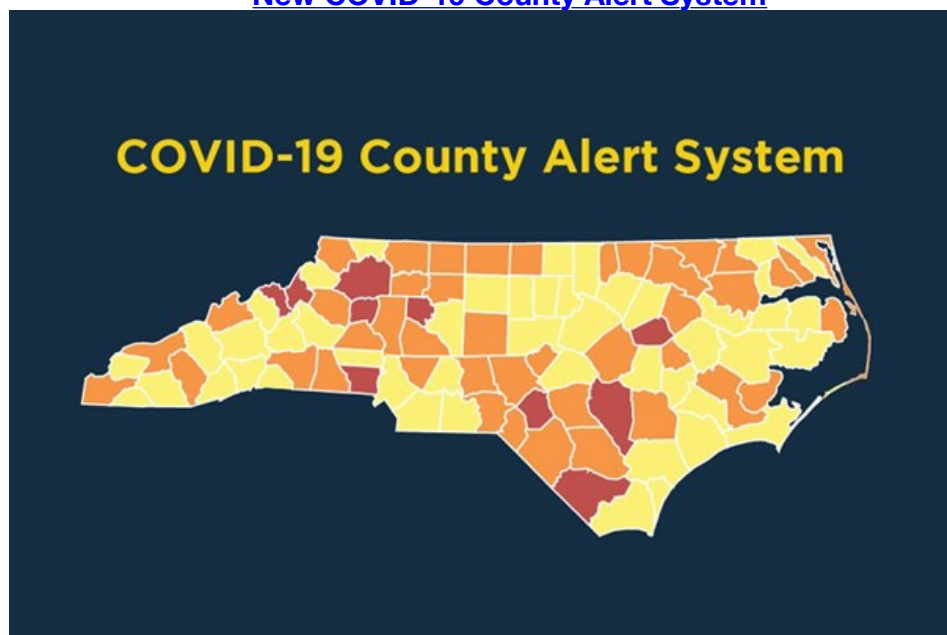
**New COVID-19 County Alert System + How to Stay Safe for Thanksgiving**  
 NCDHHS Communications [news@dhhs.nc.gov]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 20, 2020 3:09 PM  
**To:** Steve Johnston

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*Nov. 20, 2020*

[New COVID-19 County Alert System](#)



On Nov. 19, DHHS reported the state's highest one-day number of COVID-19 cases with 4,296 new cases reported. While North Carolina is currently experiencing high levels of community transmission of COVID-19 statewide, the virus is impacting some counties particularly hard.

The state has established a new [COVID-19 County Alert System](#) to help North Carolinians understand how their county is faring and take actions to slow the spread of the virus. The system uses metrics informed by the White House Coronavirus Task Force and North Carolina's key metrics to categorize counties into three tiers from least to most severe:

- [Yellow: Significant Community Spread](#)
- [Orange: Substantial Community Spread](#)
- [Red: Critical Community Spread](#)

A combination of three metrics are used to categorize a county: the COVID-19 case rate, the

percent of tests that are positive, and the hospital impact within the county. Under the system, 53 counties are currently experiencing critical or substantial community spread, with the remaining counties seeing significant community spread. The map will be updated every four weeks.

-  
[Learn more](#) about how the system works and what steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones.

### **[Secretary Cohen: How to Stay Safe for Thanksgiving](#)**



Secretary Cohen explains that while the safest thing to do for our loved ones is to limit travel and avoid getting together in person, there are steps you can take if you do plan to celebrate:

1. Check out the [Thanksgiving and Black Friday guidance](#) for ways to celebrate safely;
2. Consider getting [tested](#) for COVID-19 about 3-4 days before you travel. A positive test tells you to stay home and isolate, but a negative test doesn't give you a free pass. You still need to practice the 3 Ws: [Wear, Wait and Wash](#).
3. [Make sure to get your flu shot](#).
4. [Download the SlowCOVIDNC Exposure Notification App](#).

### **[Get It, Got It, Good: Get Your Flu Vaccination](#)**



The CDC recommends [flu vaccination](#) every year for everyone 6 months and older. [Vaccination](#) is the best way to prevent infection with the flu. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it's more important than ever before to get your flu shot. Recent data have shown it is possible for a person to be co-infected with both COVID-19 and influenza, making [vaccination critical](#) as people prepare for flu season during the ongoing pandemic.

It's available in nearly every pharmacy, doctor's office, and even curbside. Plus, you can often get it at little to no cost. Don't wait. Get your flu vaccine. Got it? Good. Learn more at [flu.nc.gov](http://flu.nc.gov). To find a flu vaccine near you, visit [VaccineFinder.org](http://VaccineFinder.org).

### **[Program Launched to Help Address Food Insecurity](#)**

North Carolina communities hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic will have access to \$5 million in grants to help address food insecurity needs. NCDHHS' Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities is [partnering](#) with Livingstone College to help churches and nonprofits address food insecurities in vulnerable populations impacted by the pandemic.

### **[COVID-19 Testing](#)**

Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should get [tested](#). If you are sick, use the [Check My Symptoms](#) tool to help you determine if you need a COVID-19 test. People who do not currently have symptoms but may have been exposed to COVID-19 should also get tested.

This weekend, NCDHHS is [offering](#) more than 120 no-cost COVID-19 community testing events. For a full list of all no-cost testing event times and locations throughout the state, visit the [No-Cost Community Testing Events](#) website. For more details about a specific event, call ahead before you go for a test.

COVID-19 testing is also provided at some local health departments, doctor and clinician offices, hospitals and clinics, many pharmacy sites and retail outlets, and other community locations. You can find additional testing sites by using the [Find My Testing Place](#) tool online.

### **[Get the Latest Information](#)**

- Visit the [NCDHHS COVID-19 Response website](#) for information, a [data dashboard](#), [updates](#), [live briefings](#) and more.
- Go to [North Carolina's COVID-19 Information Hub](#) for resources, information and assistance across state government, including the latest [news releases](#).
- Follow NCDHHS on [social media](#) for advance notice of press briefings and a recap.



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