



COVID-19: Essex opens appointment-only testing site Thursday



New Jersey's first COVID-19 Community-Based Testing Site at Bergen Community College in Paramus. Essex will open an appointment-only one Thursday, March 26. Edwin J. Torres for Governor's Office

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Tomorrow, March 26, Essex County will open its first drive-through testing site in Weequahic Park, Newark, for Essex County residents who are COVID-19 symptomatic.

The first two days of testing will take place Thursday, March 26, and Saturday, March 28. One hundred tests a day will be administered to Essex County residents only, and by appointment only.

Residents can visit www.EssexCOVID.org, where they will be required to complete a short online screening process before an appointment is scheduled. Residents will be asked several health-related questions and to detail any symptoms they have related to the coronavirus. Upon completion of the survey, they will be informed if they are eligible for the screening. If they are eligible, a confirmation number will be provided. Residents must bring the confirmation number with them to their appointment and must arrive by car.

For those without internet access, an operator at Essex County Office of Emergency Management will walk callers through the survey. Operators can be reached at 973-324-9950 from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. If the caller qualifies for testing, a confirmation number will be given over the phone

“The most effective way that elected officials and public health professionals can get a handle on how far reaching COVID-19 has become is to test residents for the virus,” Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr., Freeholder President Brendan Gill and Vice President Wayne Richardson said in a joint statement. “These screenings are in high demand and we ask for the public’s cooperation throughout this process.”

The screenings are being offered to Essex County residents only who are symptomatic of COVID-19. To get tested residents must meet specific testing criteria, which includes a fever of at least 99.6 degrees and respiratory symptoms of shortness of breath. Those who do not meet the criteria will not receive an appointment. If you are exhibiting severe symptoms, please contact your local health care provider or local health department for guidance.

Twenty-one Montclair residents have tested positive for the virus as of Tuesday, according to township health officials, resulting in four deaths. As of yesterday, Essex County had 342 cases of COVID-19.

The testing center in Essex will be also open next week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday when 150 tests a day will be administered. Appointments will be scheduled from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tests are being offered free of charge to Essex County residents. Having health insurance is not a requirement. Follow up contact will be made to assess the continuing health of the person who completed the screening.

Last Friday, the first FEMA-operated testing facility opened at Bergen Community College and tested 600 people. In the days following, testing shut down within an hour or less due to demand. The FEMA facility that opened Monday at PNC Arts Center in Holmdel also maxed out within an hour.

Another in Secaucus opened Monday but is only taking Hudson County residents and is by appointment only. Passaic County opened a testing center at William Paterson University today, Wednesday, and is open only to

residents of that county who have documentation from their doctor.

At the FEMA centers in Bergen County and Holmdel, residents only need to be a resident of New Jersey and do not need a doctor's referral, but do have to be symptomatic.

Medical personnel from RWJBarnabas Health System, Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, University Hospital, Hackensack Hospital, Essex County Hospital and nurses from public schools in Essex County are staffing the testing sites and call-in center. Security at the site is being provided by the Essex County Sheriff's Office and Newark Police Department.

Essex County will continue to administer the virus screening as long as supplies of test kits, gowns, facial masks and gloves last.

"We encourage our residents to continue to take precautions to prevent the spread of the virus and not place themselves in situations where they may be exposed," county officials said.