

Yarmouth, Maine, SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Wastewater Testing Results — March 1, 2024 Update

Due to sustained high levels of COVID virus in Yarmouth's wastewater, we are keeping the COVID-O-Meter at HIGH.

- Wastewater SARS-CoV-2 viral levels peaked in late December 2023 at 5,875 copies/mL, decreased in early January, and then plateaued in mid-January at an average level of about 1,500 copies/mL. The viral level averaged 1,524 copies/mL during February. The last time virus levels were this high in Yarmouth was in February 2023. Given these sustained levels from mid-January through February, we are keeping the COVID-O-Meter at the HIGH level.
- Fortunately, the numbers of COVID-related hospitalizations and deaths in Maine during the current period of increased viral transmission (80–85 hospitalizations and 3–4 deaths each week) have been lower than fall 2022-winter 2023 (120–200 hospitalizations and 10–20 deaths each week), and much lower than during fall 2021-winter 2022 (300–400 hospitalizations and 50–80 deaths each week). Persons over the age of 70 years continue to have a much higher risk of both hospitalization and death.
- With very limited reporting of COVID cases via official channels, we believe that the wastewater data gives us the most accurate representation of the state of infections within our community and that wastewater viral levels are the best measure of community virus transmission.
- Wastewater is also being used to monitor for the emergence of new SARS-CoV-2 variants.
- See the figure and table below for additional information. The following links provide information about Maine (<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus/data.shtml>) and national wastewater testing (<https://www.cdc.gov/nwss/rv/COVID19-nationaltrend.html>).



We recommend that the Yarmouth community increase efforts to reduce COVID transmission.

- Get vaccinated and boosted. An updated monovalent booster based on the recently circulating variant (XBB.1.5) is now available in Maine. Appointments for vaccination with the updated booster are available at pharmacies in Yarmouth.
- Any time you have symptoms, isolate yourself from people and use a rapid antigen test for 2 days in a row to determine if you have COVID.
- If you test positive for COVID or believe you have a COVID infection, discuss the value of medications for COVID with your doctor. These medications can shorten the length and severity of the illness and likely reduce transmission to others. In addition, tell the people with whom you have been in contact during the 2 days prior to your positive test that they may have been exposed.
- On February 29th the U.S. CDC [updated its recommendations about isolation](#) for those with [COVID and other common respiratory viral illnesses](#), such as influenza and RSV. They recommend that persons suspected as having any of these respiratory diseases do the following:
 - When sick, stay home and away from others.
 - Return to normal activities when, for at least 24 hours, symptoms are improving overall, and if a fever was present, the fever has been gone without use of a fever-reducing

medication (such as aspirin, acetaminophen/Tylenol, and nonsteroidal medications, such as ibuprofen).

- Once people resume normal activities, they are encouraged to take additional prevention strategies for the next 5 days to curb disease spread, such as taking more steps for cleaner air, enhancing hygiene practices, wearing a well-fitting mask, keeping a distance from others, and/or getting tested for respiratory viruses.
- In spite of these updated U.S. CDC recommendations, If you have COVID, our advice is to use the antigen (home) test to decide if you are still shedding virus and how long you need to be isolated: Stay home and isolate until your antigen test is negative.
 - The intensity of the line on the antigen test reflects the amount of virus that you are shedding, and the intensity will decrease as you recover from COVID. When the line disappears, you are no longer transmitting the virus.
 - The average time for antigen tests to become negative and viral shedding to end is around 7-10 days. But the time can be shorter and, regrettably, longer (up to 21 days).
- Persons who are immune compromised due to medical conditions or medical treatments should take particular care, as should those around them.
 - If you have a positive antigen test, don't go around people that are immune compromised or over 70 years of age. (Safest)
 - To be cautious, when gathering with people at higher risk, test with a rapid antigen test and wear a mask.
- With the public health emergency lifted, it is left to individuals to decide what exposures and risks are acceptable. In some situations, individuals may want the lowest risk, while others may feel socialization, employment, or other practical considerations are their highest priority.
 - If you must go out and your test is still positive, you may leave isolation after five days if your symptoms are improved and you don't have a fever. But, wear a mask until your antigen test is negative.
- If you want the lowest risk of transmission,
 - Avoid crowded indoor spaces;
 - Wear a mask in indoor public places, particularly if you are unvaccinated, 60 years of age or older, or immunocompromised. When you wear your mask, you show that mask-wearing is still an option and encourage others to do so when they are worried or possibly infectious.
 - When indoors, ensure that there is good ventilation (air exchange).

Notes & Acknowledgement

Yarmouth's wastewater testing program for SARS-CoV-2 is currently collecting and testing two 24-hour composite wastewater samples each week. Samples are collected from 7 am Tuesday to 7 am Wednesday and 7 am Wednesday to 7 am Thursday. Samples are sent twice a week to the Verily lab in South San Francisco and once a week to Biobot Analytics in Cambridge, Massachusetts for testing.

We would like to thank Chris Cline and Yarmouth Wastewater Treatment Facility staff for collecting the wastewater samples twice a week and Steve Johnson, Yarmouth's Town Engineer, for overseeing the wastewater testing program.

Figure. Results of weekly Wastewater Testing for SARS-CoV-2 for Yarmouth, Maine, May 3, 2022, – February 28, 2024.

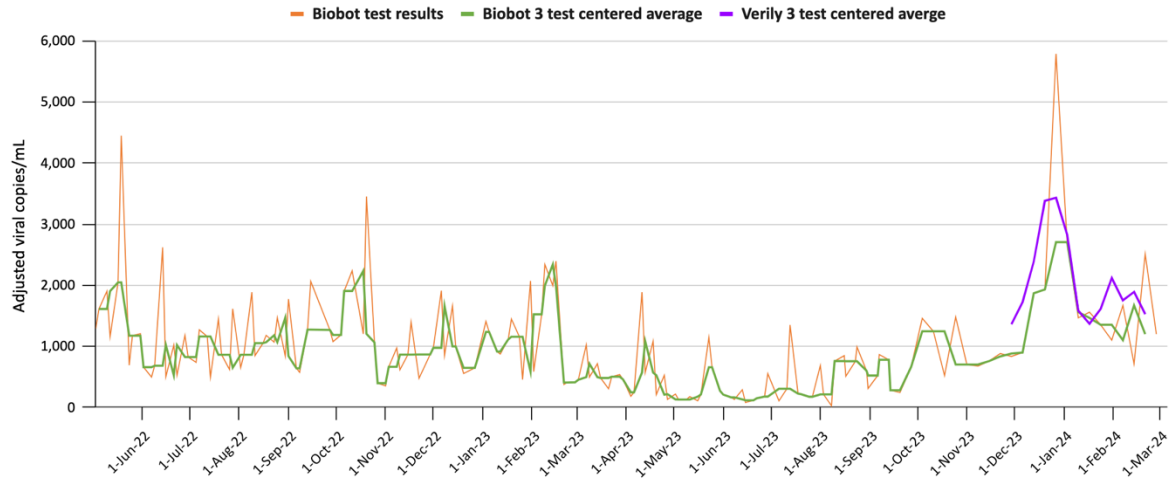


Table. Results of US CDC–Biobot wastewater testing for SARS-CoV-2 for Yarmouth, Maine, May 3, 2022 – February 28, 2024.

Sample Submission date†	EVC‡	Sample Submission date†	EVC‡	Sample Submission date†	EVC‡	Sample Submission date†	EVC‡	Sample Submission date†	EVC‡	Sample Submission date†	EVC‡
2022		2022		2023		2023		2023		2024	
3 May	1,292	25 Aug	1,468	3 Jan	1,409	20 Apr	211	10 Aug	759	31 Jan 24	1,101
5 May	1,612	30 Aug	841	5 Jan	1,237	25 Apr	528	16 Aug	848	7 Feb 24	1,670
10 May	1,903	1 Sept	1,775	10 Jan	915	27 Apr	134	17 Aug	512	14 Feb 24	714
12 May	1,156	6 Sept	642	12 Jan	873	2 May	219	23 Aug	757	21 Feb 24	2,512
17 May	2,047	8 Sept	578	17 Jan	1,114	4 May	129	24 Aug	992	28 Feb 24	1,201
19 May	4,447	13 Sept	1,275	19 Jan	1,448	9 May	130	30 Aug	603		
24 May	692	15 Sept	2,063	24 Jan	1,158	11 May	179	31 Aug	311		
26 May	1,174	27 Sept	1,270	26 Jan	458	16 May	111	6 Sep	523		
31 May	1,207	29 Sept	1,078	31 Jan	2,072	18 May	213	7 Sep	866		
2 June	660	4 Oct	1,186	2 Feb	588	23 May	1,145	13 Sep	780		
7 June	499	6 Oct	1,906	7 Feb	1,524	25 May	659	14 Sep	283		
9 June	684	11 Oct	2,236	9 Feb	2,340	30 May	275	20 Sep	244		
14 June	2,619	18 Oct	1,204	14 Feb	1,993	1 Jun	212	27 Sep	660		
16 June	502	20 Oct	3,452	16 Feb	2,394	6 Jun	166	4 Oct	1,459		
21 June	1,022	25 Oct	1,065	21 Feb	377	8 Jun	133	11 Oct	1,246		
23 June	527	27 Oct	398	23 Feb	410	13 Jun	291	18 Oct	523		
28 June	1,180	1 Nov	353	28 Feb	413	15 Jun	81	25 Oct	1,481		
5 July	738	3 Nov	667	2 Mar	453	20 Jun	118	1 Nov	703		
7 July	1,271	8 Nov	975	7 Mar	1,026	22 Jun	151	8 Nov	677		
12 July	1,162	10 Nov	617	9 Mar	498	27 Jun	179	15 Nov	760		
14 July	497	15 Nov	865	14 Mar	716	29 Jun	554	22 Nov	883		
19 July	1,448	17 Nov	1,398	16 Mar	483	6 Jul	109	29 Nov	836		
21 July	864	22 Nov*	477	21 Mar	308	11 Jul	307	6 Dec	900		
26 July	621	29 Nov	868	23 Mar	504	13 Jul	1,350	13 Dec	1,869		
28 July	1,616	1 Dec	976	28 Mar	538	18 Jul	227	20 Dec	1,931		
2 Aug	652	6 Dec	1,912	30 Mar	462	20 Jul	218	27 Dec	5,785		
4 Aug	863	8 Dec	851	4 Apr	184	25 Jul	172	2024			
9 Aug	1,887	13 Dec	1,661	6 Apr	248	27 Jul	176	3 Jan	2,705		
11 Aug	850	15 Dec	1,000	11 Apr	1,887	1 Aug	687	10 Jan	1,466		
16 Aug	1,052	20 Dec*	556	13 Apr	571	3 Aug	215	17 Jan	1,560		
18 Aug	1,180	27 Dec*	648	18 Apr	1,084	8 Aug	29	24 Jan	1,802		

† 24-hour influent wastewater samples are collected proportional to flow from 7am on day 1 to 7am on day 2. Day 2 is the sample submission date.

‡ EVC (Effective virus concentration expressed as copies/mL) is derived by adjusting the raw virus concentration to account for dilution and other factors.

*There was no testing on November 24, December 22, December 29, 2022, and July 4, 2023, due to holidays.