

## **Chebeague Covid Test Team Update: January 1, 2022**

We all thought that the pandemic would be in the rear-view mirror by now, but the rise of variants including Delta and now Omicron, the slow roll out of children's vaccines, and rapid community spread even among persons without symptoms, has made this an extra tricky virus to contain. The volunteer Chebeague Covid Test Team (CCTT) regrouped informally this fall due to the rise in cases in Maine. Currently, Nancy Hill, RN, and Jenny Hackel, NP do their best to provide as-needed testing when possible that cannot be done on the mainland (see contact phone numbers below).

Vaccinated and boosted people are far less likely to contract and spread any of the variants of Covid or need hospitalization compared to unvaccinated people. Because of the coordinated response to the pandemic on Chebeague and the willingness of 95% of island residents to be vaccinated and get tested when symptoms arise (as well as isolate if Covid is detected), there have been very few isolated cases on the island (compared to the mainland) and no one has needed hospitalization.

History: The CCTT team was originally instigated by the Community Action Response Team (CART) in the summer of 2020 to help anyone with symptoms find out if they had Covid-19 and avoid a trip to the mainland, thereby reducing the risk of spread. Under Melissa Yosua-Davis's leadership as minister at the church, the CCTT received grant money from the Recompense Fund to underwrite this community service. Additionally, Dr. Kip Webb forged a relationship with the State Health and Environmental Testing Lab (HETL), and the CCTT received testing supplies and personal protective equipment, as well as a waiver to be a testing site. The CART and CCTT have also worked together to bring Covid vaccination services to the island through the Maine CDC nurses at our local Cumberland County immunization program. All work is done by volunteers.

As always, we ask that you request visitors be vaccinated and tested before coming to the island. Self-tests can be purchased at many pharmacies. Call ahead to check if tests are in stock; some pharmacies provide drive through purchasing. If you develop any concerning symptoms, please contact your primary care provider, and check the Maine CDC website for current information on Covid. Since we have learned more about immunity over time, booster shots are generally recommended. Here is the link to the Maine CDC website about Covid issues: <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/>

To locate a free testing site on the mainland:

<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/keepmainehealthy/testing>

To find Maine vaccination sites, call 888-455-4111 or click this link:

<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines>

*Thank you for doing your part to keep Chebeague as safe and healthy as possible!*

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