



IMPORTANT BALTIMORE COMMUNITY COVID UPDATE

January 10, 2021
26 Teves 5781

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Hatzalah remains actively involved in the contact tracing efforts within our community. Together with the community Covid testing operation and our community doctors, we work with data analysts to watch for trends affecting our community. Here are some key and alarming observations.

- Over the last three weeks, we have seen a steady increase in Covid cases in the community. We are now seeing approximately six times as many positive cases per week as compared to only a few weeks ago, especially among school-age children.
- Exposures to/from extended family (even those who live in a different household) have been one of the major sources of infection.
- The positivity rate for those showing even minor symptoms has been exceptionally high in recent weeks. "I thought it was just a runny nose on a cold day" is a VERY common refrain we hear from people who end up being Covid-positive. The spread that has come from these situations and its potential effects on higher-risk population, is a very serious concern.
- By far the most common sources of spread are situations where proper protocols are not adhered to. This includes large gatherings and simchas. It also includes social groups of friends (particularly teens) who get together without proper adherence to safety protocols.

Key Takeaways:

- Masks work and save lives! It is extremely important to follow safety guidelines and increase our vigilance, even though it may be difficult and we are all tired of Covid.
- Parents must exercise discretion and encourage their children to mask properly, especially when around others like with friends or in carpool. This is for the safety of the entire community.
- Extreme caution must be exercised when considering a large gathering of family or friends. It can't be emphasized enough - we are seeing many simchos and/or gatherings that end up being super spreader events. It happened on Chanukah. Consider this carefully when making simcha plans. Also carefully consider or reconsider plans for the upcoming midwinter break.
- It is essential that those with even minor or mild Covid symptoms not take them lightly and consult with their physician as to what action is necessary. If your healthcare provider is not readily available, err on the side of caution until you contact them, or get tested. Also, we do not recommend relying on rapid testing for final determinations, only PCR (overnight) testing.

May Hashem send a Refuah Shleima to all those who are ill and protect our community and all of Klal Yisroel.

Dr. Yosef Levenbrown
Medical Director, Hatzalah of Baltimore

Hatzalah Analytics Team