

Women's Health Awareness Transforming Communities by Enhancing Women's Health



News You Can Use: Important COVID-19 Updates

The holidays are here, and we are all longing to be together. With increased traveling this holiday season, COVID-19 cases are on the rise. According to the [COVID-19 North Carolina Dashboard](#), COVID-19 cases have increased significantly after the Thanksgiving holiday.

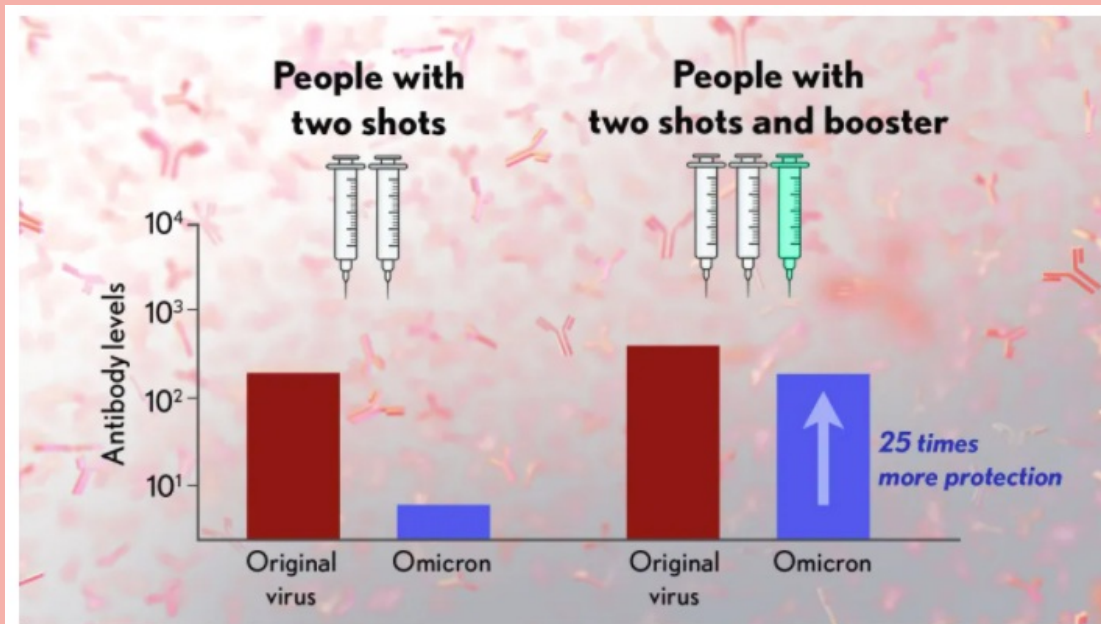
With the holiday season and people getting together, there is greater risk of COVID-19 spreading and overwhelming hospitals with patients. Nationally, the [CDC predicts](#) the number of COVID-19 hospital admissions will likely increase over the next month. [North Carolina's numbers](#) have all been greatly increasing, including people going to the Emergency Department with COVID-like symptoms, cases, the percent of tests that are positive, and hospitalizations.

Multiple news outlets, as well as public health experts, report that the new COVID-19 variant, [Omicron](#), is on the rise. Coronavirus cases caused by the Omicron variant have been detected in North Carolina, many other states, as well as the nation's capital. While we still don't know a lot about Omicron, scientists are studying the variant and have some reassuring news about vaccinations. Recent studies from the United Kingdom (UK) indicate that two dose immunization shots may not be enough to protect against the breakthrough infections caused by the Omicron variant ([Pfizer, 2021](#)). However, findings suggest that it is possible to get good protection against the Omicron variant by getting the COVID-19 booster immunization. The booster substantially raises vaccine effectiveness to about 80 percent.

Here is some information about the Omicron variant that may be helpful to you and your family:

1. The Omicron variant appears to be more transmissible, spreading faster than the Delta variant and will likely soon become the dominant strain in the U.S.
2. According to preliminary research, the Omicron variant appears to cause less severe illness than the Delta variant. However, more research needs to be done to confirm this.
3. Being fully vaccinated plus receiving the booster is the best way to protect against all forms of COVID-19 and to reduce hospitalizations and death. CDC recommends that everyone ages 16 years and older get a [booster](#) shot at least two

months after their initial J&J/Janssen vaccine or six months after completing their primary COVID-19 vaccination series of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna. CDC currently endorses recommendations for individuals to receive an [mRNA COVID-19 vaccine over Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine](#).



Credit: Adapted from Pfizer, Dec. 8, 2021

4. Stay up to date with accurate information on the Omicron variant by visiting websites such as the [CDC](#).

Staying Safe this Holiday Season

Know that we are not out of the woods yet. The pandemic is still with us, and we need to continue to be vigilant with our COVID-19 safety practices.

1. Continue to protect yourself by following social distancing practices! Wearing a mask, especially in public indoor settings, crowded outdoor settings, and activities where you are in close contact with others, offers good protection against the spread of all COVID-19 variants. Remember: It is important to [wear your mask properly and to wear the right type of mask](#) for your situation.
 2. Avoid poorly ventilated spaces and places where there is no circulating outdoor fresh air. Try to visit places that you are certain have proper ventilating systems where outdoor fresh air circulates in and indoor air is circulated outside.
 3. Get tested and know your COVID-19 status. This is important as you
 4. Getting your COVID-19 health information from reliable sources is important. Go to the [CDC website](#) or the [NC DHHS COVID-19 Response website](#) for the most timely, updated, and accurate information. **Do not totally rely on social media as there is a lot of misinformation and deception out there as it relates to COVID-19 health information.**
 5. We cannot forget about the importance of the flu vaccine during this season! Remember to get your flu shot.
 6. **MOST IMPORTANTLY:** Do not ignore this virus! It has not gone away!
- For vaccine information, ask your doctor, nurse or other medical professional or go to**

could unknowingly infect others. If you have symptoms or think you may have been exposed, stay home until you receive your results. If you have a positive COVID-19 test result, you should isolate from others.

other reliable online sources such as [NCDHHS COVID-19 Response website](#) or the [CDC website Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines](#).



Guidance for Winter Holiday Gatherings

North Carolina is experiencing another rise in COVID-19 cases due to the highly contagious Delta variant, primarily in people who are not vaccinated. In addition, a new variant, Omicron, has emerged globally that appears to be even more contagious. Safe and tested COVID-19 vaccines reduce the chances of getting COVID-19 and provide significant protection from serious illness, hospitalization, and death.

With the holidays approaching and people gathering, protect yourself and your family and friends.

THIS WINTER AND HOLIDAY SEASON



VACCINATE

Get vaccinated before gathering, attending events, or traveling. Get your booster when eligible. Layer protection with a flu shot.



TEST

Get tested if you have symptoms and before and after gathering or traveling, even if you are vaccinated.



MASK

Wear a mask indoors, even if you are vaccinated.



All WHA health messages and newsletters are found on our website!!

Visit our Website



*This communication was developed by
the Office of Human Research and Community Engagement, Clinical Research Branch,
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.*



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