

Health Experts Warn of Omicron Impact, Don't Wait to Vaccinate + Guidance for Winter Holiday Gatherings



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COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) NC UPDATE

Dec. 17, 2021

[Health Experts Warn of Significant Impact From Omicron Variant of COVID-19; NCDHHS Urges Everyone to get Vaccinated and Boosted with a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

[Health experts are warning](#) that the highly contagious COVID-19 variant, Omicron, is expected to cause the greatest surge in COVID-19 infections to date in the coming months. **The CDC and NCDHHS urge people to get vaccinated with an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) as soon as possible and to get a booster as soon as they are eligible to help prevent serious illness, hospitalization and death.**

"Please get vaccinated and boosted because that's the best way to protect yourself, your friends and your family during the holidays," said Governor Roy Cooper. "As the Omicron variant spreads through the United States, it is more clear than ever that these shots provide strong protection against serious illness and death if you get infected."

The CDC [now recommends](#) the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines as the best choice for most people for preventing infection from COVID-19. There is ample supply of both vaccines in North Carolina and across the country. The CDC emphasized receiving any vaccine, including the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, is better than being unvaccinated.

Vaccinating against COVID-19 remains the most effective way for people to protect themselves from serious illness, hospitalization and death. Once vaccinated, people should get a booster. Anyone who received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, should get a booster 6 months after their second dose. Anyone who received a Johnson & Johnson vaccine should receive a Pfizer or Moderna booster 2 months after their original shot.

Visit the NCDHHS website for more information about [boosters and additional doses](#). More information about vaccines for kids can be found [here](#). To find a vaccine location, or for more information about COVID-19 vaccines in North Carolina, visit [MySpot.nc.gov](https://www.mySpot.nc.gov) or call the state's COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center for free at 888-675-4567.

[Guidance for Winter Holiday Gatherings](#)



With the holidays approaching and people gathering, protect yourself and those you love with three steps. With the presence of Omicron and the upcoming holiday, all North Carolinians should:

1. **[Get vaccinated](#)** before gathering, attending events, or traveling. [Get your booster](#) when eligible. Layer protection with a [flu shot](#).
2. **[Get tested](#)** if you have symptoms and before and after gathering or traveling, even if you are vaccinated.
3. **[Wear a mask](#)** indoors, even if you are vaccinated.

[Get Your Flu and COVID Vaccines](#)

Layer up this winter



Get your flu and COVID-19 shots.

Flu season is here and this week NCDHHS reported the first reported [flu-related death](#) of the 2021–22 flu season. Make sure to layer up your protection this winter and get both your flu and COVID-19 vaccines. COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same time as other vaccines, including the flu vaccine.

The CDC recommends flu vaccination every year for everyone 6 months and older. Vaccination is the best way to prevent infection with the flu. Vaccination can also make illness milder for those who do get the flu, making it especially important for those at higher risk of more serious outcomes, such as people over 65 years old, children younger than 5, pregnant women and those with certain medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

Learn more about the [similarities and differences between the flu and COVID-19](#) from the CDC, and visit [covid19.ncdhhs.gov/flu](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/covid19) for more information about the flu and where to get your flu and COVID-19 vaccines.

[Don't Wait to Vaccinate Your Teen](#)



Vaccines are critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and helping teens get back safely to the activities they love the most. Visit TeenVaxFacts.com for more helpful information, tools and resources for teens – and visit MySpot.nc.gov to find a vaccine location near you.

Other COVID News

- NCDHHS [received approval](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to continue the Student Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) food assistance program for eligible K-12 students through the 2021-22 school year under new rules.
- A temporary mobile vaccination unit that operated across Western North Carolina since July has [ended its operations](#) this week after providing more than 9,300 vaccinations.

COVID-19 Testing

Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has been exposed to the virus should get tested as soon as possible. Seek medical attention immediately for serious symptoms such as trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, or bluish lips or face.

- To find a testing site near you, visit ncdhhs.gov/GetTested.
- For an up-to-date list of no-cost community testing events, visit the [No-Cost Testing Events](#) webpage.

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- Additionally, all North Carolinians can request a free at-home COVID-19 testing kit. [Learn more.](#)

Get the Latest Information

- Visit the [NCDHHS COVID-19 website](#) for information, a [data dashboard](#), [updates](#), [live briefings](#), the [latest guidance](#) and more.
- Go to [North Carolina's COVID-19 Information Hub](#) for resources, information and assistance across state government, including the latest [news releases](#).
- Check out [YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov](#) to learn more about [finding your spot](#) to get your shot, [videos](#) about the COVID-19 vaccine, and other resources.
- Follow NCDHHS on [social media](#).



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