

Act Now to Protect Yourself this Holiday Season + Hope4NC Mental Health Resources



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COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) NC UPDATE

Dec. 21, 2021

Act Now to Protect Yourself, Your Family and Your Friends



VACCINATE & BOOST



TEST



MASK

COVID-19 cases are currently rising in North Carolina due to the Delta variant. The highly contagious variant, Omicron, is beginning to spread rapidly and is expected to cause the highest rates of COVID-19 infections of the pandemic in the coming weeks. The Omicron variant is two to three times as contagious the Delta variant, making it four to six times as contagious as the original COVID-19 virus.

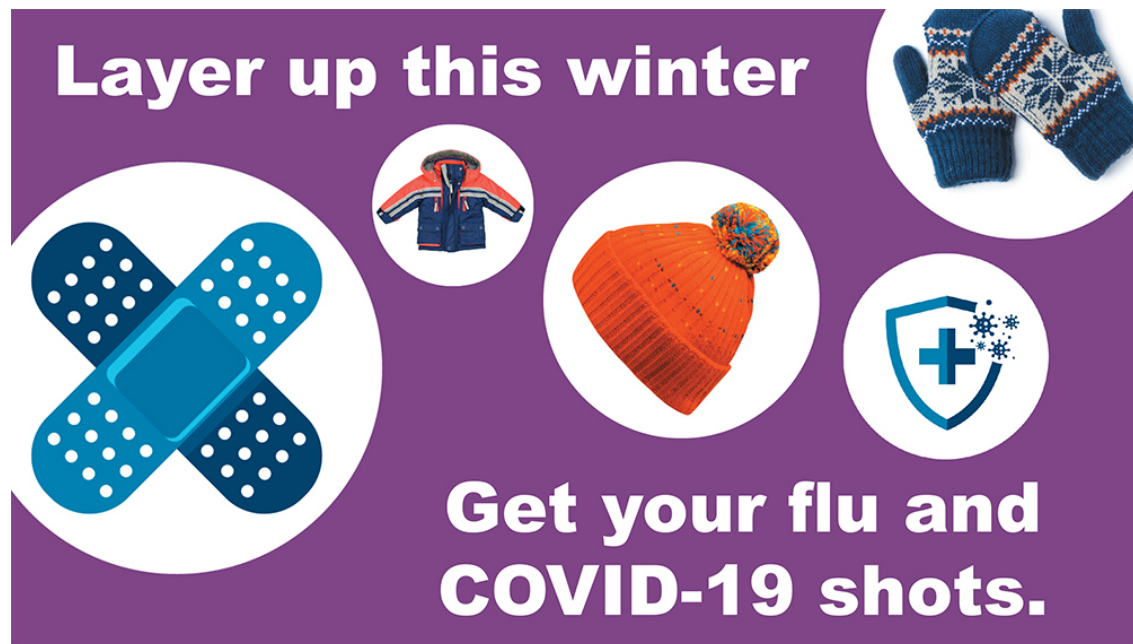
NCDHHS Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D., issued the following urgent guidance for

this winter and holiday season:

- **Vaccinate and Boost:** Get [vaccinated now](#), including a [COVID-19 booster](#) as soon as you are eligible. This is particularly critical for those over age 65, those with underlying medical conditions and healthcare workers. The [Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines are the best choice](#) for most people.
- **Test:** Get a COVID-19 test before joining indoor gatherings with others who are not in your household and before and after traveling, regardless of your vaccine status. Get tested if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. Go [here](#) to find a testing location.
- **Mask:** Wear a face covering indoors in public, even if you are vaccinated. If possible, wear a medical grade mask for more protection (e.g., surgical mask, procedural mask, KN95, N95).

For more guidance regarding holiday travel and gatherings, see the [NCDHHS Secretarial Advisory](#).

Get Your Flu and COVID Vaccines



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.covid19.ncdhhs.gov/flu) for more information about the flu and where to get your flu and COVID-19 vaccines.

[Hope4NC Mental Health Resources](#)



[Watch](#) NC native, Rapsody, talk about [Hope4NC](#), a mental health service that is here to connect you with the help you need, whenever you need it. Call 1-855-587-3463 24/7 for free and confidential emotional support, counseling referrals and community resources.

[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](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/GetTested). With increased demand for testing, try a different community-based site if your normal one is busy.
- For an up-to-date list of no-cost community testing events, visit the [No-Cost Testing Events](#) webpage.
- 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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