

Vaccinate, Boost, Test and Mask to Fight Omicron + COVID-19 Boosters Update



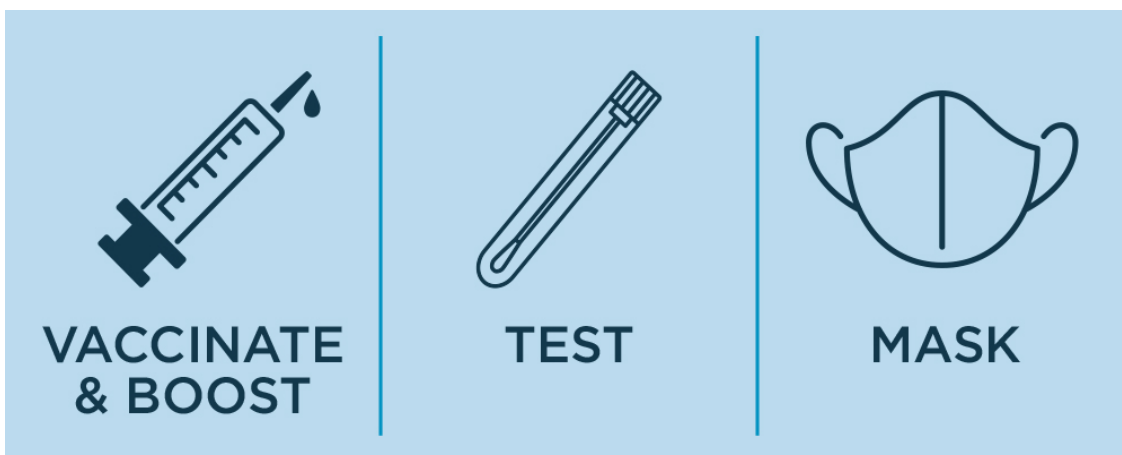
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COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) NC UPDATE

Jan. 7, 2022

Vaccinate, Boost, Test and Wear a Mask to Combat Omicron



With cases of COVID-19 reaching [record highs](#) and hospitalizations increasing, Governor Cooper and NCDHHS Secretary Kinsley called on all North Carolinians to get vaccinated and get a booster as soon as they are eligible to protect themselves from severe illness from the highly contagious Omicron variant of COVID-19. Currently, 87% of the patients in the ICU are unvaccinated.

[Early studies](#) show that boosters greatly increase someone's immune response and

provide greater protection against the Omicron variant. The booster is especially important for those over 65 or in other populations at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

The Governor and Secretary also urged the use of well-fitting, multi-layer masks as another layer of protection against spread of the virus. If possible, wear a surgical or procedure mask, a KN95, or an N95.

NCDHHS is making some higher-grade masks available for adults at no cost in more places that need them, such as long-term care facilities and federally qualified health centers, and for schools staff and populations like migrant farm workers which at higher risk of exposure or severe illness. These organizations and those that provide essential services can request these masks [here](#).

Information on testing locations, free tests and home tests is available at ncdhhs.gov/gettested. North Carolinians can learn more about the COVID-19 vaccines and find a spot to take your shot at myspot.nc.gov (English) or [Vacunate.nc.gov](https://vacunate.nc.gov) (Spanish). Call the North Carolina Vaccine Help Center at 888-675-4567 for help making an appointment. It is open 7 a.m.–7 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m.–4 p.m. on weekends.

COVID-19 Boosters Update



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [announced](#) its recommendation of the [Pfizer COVID-19 booster for children ages 12 to 15](#) and a [third dose of Pfizer for children ages 5 to 11](#) who have compromised immune systems to further protect them from COVID-19.

Additionally, the wait time for boosters for anyone who received the the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination has been reduced from [six to five months](#). The FDA has also authorized reducing the wait time for the Moderna booster to five months, but the CDC still needs to act.

These booster recommendations come during a surge in COVID-19 infections caused by the highly contagious Omicron variant and as early research shows booster doses increase a person's ability to fight the new variant.

CDC Updates Isolation and Quarantine Guidance

NCDHHS has aligned with the CDC's updated guidance on isolation and quarantine.

If you test positive for COVID-19: Stay away from others for at least 5 full days and wear a mask for an additional 5 days when you resume normal activities.

If you test positive for COVID-19 and have symptoms: Stay away from others until you are fever-free and your symptoms are improving. This should be at least 5 days since your symptoms began. Once you resume normal activities, you should wear a mask until it has been a total of 10 days after your symptoms began.

If you are exposed to COVID-19: Stay away from others for 5 days and wear a mask for an additional 5 days. You do not need to quarantine if you are up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccines. For adults, this includes boosters. You also do not need to quarantine if you tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days. *If you develop symptoms and cannot get tested, follow the guidance for a positive test.*

However, people who are up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccines — including a booster for adults — do not need to stay away from others if they are exposed, but should wear a mask for 10 days. Because North Carolina remains in the [CDC's red zone](#) with high community transmission, all North Carolinians should wear a mask in public indoor spaces.

NCDHHS School Guidance Encourages Vaccines and Masking, Provides a New Test-to-Stay Option

With COVID-19 cases reaching pandemic highs, the NCDHHS [urges K-12 schools](#) to promote vaccination and boosters for students and staff and require students and staff wear masks indoors to keep students in the classroom and [limit the risk of COVID-19 transmission](#).

Additionally, NCDHHS has added a Test-to-Stay strategy to reduce absences, which can be found in the [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit](#). This Test-to-Stay option **only applies to K-12 school settings that require masks**, which data has shown limits the risk of transmission. As part of Test-to-Stay, the person who was exposed to COVID-19 should:

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- Get tested the day they are notified of an exposure.
 - Get tested again five days after the exposure (or as close to five days as possible).
 - Wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure.
 - Except for attending school, stay home and avoid others.

School districts, charter schools and private schools can request testing kits and other testing support from NCDHHS as part of the [StrongSchoolsNC K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program](#). [Read more](#).

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. This includes people over 65 years old, children younger than five, 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 for more information about the flu and where to get your flu and COVID-19 vaccines.

Other COVID News

- Eligible North Carolinians can [apply online](#) for help with energy costs through the [Low-Income Energy Assistance Program](#) or the [Crisis Intervention Program](#).
- NCDHHS will issue the first round of [Student Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer](#) (P-EBT) benefits next week for eligible students. The state is still awaiting federal approval for [Child Care P-EBT](#).
- [Governor Cooper signed](#) an [Executive Order](#) to strengthen the state's ongoing fight against COVID-19 with more health care workers and flexibility for care facilities, as well as easier access to vaccines, tests and treatments.
- NCDHHS' [Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program](#) will [expand](#) to include all low-income households needing assistance in paying their water bill.

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. 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](#).

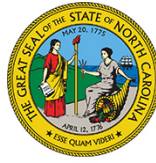
Get the Latest Information

- 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](#).



the NC Department of Health and Human Services

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