

COVID-19 GUIDANCE UPDATE

Community Level Guidance

To help individuals and communities make informed decisions for COVID-19 prevention, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) established COVID-19 Community Levels based on hospitalization and COVID-19 case data. The CDC offers an [online tracker](#) of COVID-19 levels by county on their website. Recommended community guidance includes:

- **Low:** Receive initial vaccinations and booster shot(s). Test if symptoms appear.
- **Medium:** Individuals who are at high risk for severe COVID-19 infections should consider wearing a mask in addition to vaccinations, boosters, and testing when symptoms appear.
- **High:** In addition to vaccinations, boosters, and testing, masks should be worn for everyone age two and older in public indoor places, including schools and workplaces.

Vaccines

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized an emergency use for both Pfizer and Moderna's updated booster vaccines on August 31. The updated booster formula offers protection against the original coronavirus strain and the newer Omicron variant that has caused most of the cases in the US.

Booster doses are intended to help provide additional protection as the original vaccine effectiveness wanes over time. The CDC recommends



booster doses at least two months after an individual's last COVID-19 vaccine whether that is a booster dose or a vaccine from the initial series. Eligible individuals can receive either a Moderna or Pfizer updated booster regardless of their initial vaccine series (Pfizer, Moderna, Novavax, or Johnson & Johnson). People over the age of 12 are eligible to receive Pfizer's updated booster and people over the age of 18 are eligible for Moderna's.

The CDC recommends a booster dose to all eligible individuals over the age of 12. People who completed their initial series and who received a booster should get an updated booster at least two months after their last vaccine. The recommendation for immunocompromised people is to receive an additional dose at least 28 days after their second shot, however they should speak with their provider about what will best meet their needs.

In June 2022, the CDC authorized pediatric vaccinations for children six months and older. The CDC recommends a booster five months following the second dose for children over the age of five who received the Pfizer vaccine. Pediatric dosing is at a decreased amount for children twelve and under.

Masks

Masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Medical masks protect the wearer from coming into contact with droplets and sprays. They also filter out large particles in the air as well. Respirators like the



KN95s offer more protection than medical masks because they filter both small and large particles in the air. Cloth masks offer the least amount of protection, but still benefit the wearer. Cloth masks help trap the droplets that the wearer might spread when coughing or talking. Effective cloth masks should have multiple layers of fabric to help droplets from getting or coming through the barrier.

Mask wearing is recommended when COVID-19 community levels start to rise or when personal risk is increased. As noted above, masks are recommended for individuals with an increased risk of COVID-19 in communities with medium levels. In communities with high levels of COVID-19, the CDC recommends that all people, regardless of risk status, wear masks in indoor public spaces. People may always choose to wear masks regardless of current COVID-19 levels.

Masks with filtration components like the N95s or KN95s provide the most

protection, but only if worn correctly. The mask should fit over the nose and mouth without any gaps.

Quarantine and Isolation

Quarantine and isolation guidance are the same for everyone regardless of vaccination status as of August 2022. If exposed to COVID-19, an individual should wear a good quality mask for ten days and test on the fifth day.

However, if a test is positive for COVID-19 or an individual is sick and awaiting test results, isolation is recommended. If an individual tests positive, they should isolate themselves for at least five days. For mild cases, asymptomatic people, and people who are fever free, the CDC recommends isolating for five days as well as wearing a mask for ten days. For moderate or severe infections or for immunocompromised individuals, the CDC recommends isolating for ten days. If after isolation ends and symptoms return or worsen,

guidance suggests restarting the full isolation period.

Testing Positive

If a person tests positive for COVID-19, follow the appropriate isolation guidelines based on infection severity. A person who tests positive should immediately notify people with whom they have been in close contact, monitor their symptoms and notify health care providers if symptoms worsen. Regardless of disease severity, everyone who tests positive should wear a mask until:

- 1) Ten days after the positive test result, or
- 2) If they receive two negative rapid tests 48 hours apart.

Treatments

Paxlovid is an oral, antiviral COVID-19 drug that was granted emergency use authorization for people over the age of 12 who weigh at least 88 pounds. People who test positive for COVID-19 are eligible for Paxlovid but must begin treatment within five days of developing symptoms. Paxlovid is not available over the counter but is free of charge when prescribed by healthcare providers. Clinical trials show that Paxlovid is effective; it has reduced the risk of hospitalization and death by 89%. A small number of people have reported the reappearance of symptoms after taking Paxlovid. However, many report a milder case in the recurrence of symptoms.

For more information and guidance, contact Respiratory Health Association at info@resphealth.org or visit [RespHealth.org/Covid-19](https://www.RespHealth.org/Covid-19)

References

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