



**NEVADA
HEALTH
RESPONSE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Press Bulletin for December 2, 2021

Carson City, NV — Today, Melissa Peek-Bullock, State Epidemiologist, DuAne Young, Policy Director for Governor Sisolak, Dr. Mark Pandori, Director of the Nevada State Public Health Laboratory and Dr. Ellie Graeden of Talus Analytics provided information on Nevada's ongoing COVID-19 response during a call with members of the media.

This bulletin provides facts, figures, and informational items from the call. As a reminder, data is provided in a dashboard on the home page of the [Nevada Health Response](#) website.

SUMMARY:

- When COVID-19 is present in the community it is important to protect ourselves and our families, the State continues to encourage vaccination for all those who are eligible and remind everyone to stay home and away from others if they don't feel well.
- Many Nevadans are looking forward to the holiday season and spending time with friends and family, but it is important to remember the steps to take if you were exposed.
- The terms quarantine and isolation are often used, but they are not interchangeable:
 - Quarantine keeps someone who was in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 away from others.
 - Isolation keeps someone who is sick or tested positive for COVID-19 without symptoms away from others, even in their own home.

- If you are a close contact to someone who has COVID-19 you must quarantine unless you have been fully vaccinated.
- If you are fully vaccinated:
 - Although, you do not need to quarantine, if you become symptomatic then you should immediately self-isolate.
 - Get tested 3-5 days after your exposure, even if you do not have symptoms
 - Wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until your test result is negative
- If you are not fully vaccinated:
 - Stay home for 10 days after your LAST exposure with a person who has COVID-19, or for 7 days if you test negative no earlier than day 3 to 5 from last exposure.
 - Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days after last exposure to a positive person
 - If possible, stay away from people you live with, especially those that are at higher risk for getting sick from COVID-19
- If you test positive for COVID-19 or become symptomatic while in quarantine you should immediately self-isolate. People who are in isolation should stay home and stay in a specific "sick room" or area and use a separate bathroom if possible.
- If you are sick and think or know you have COVID-19, stay home until after:
 - At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared, and
 - At least 24 hours with no fever and without the use of fever-reducing medications, and
 - Symptoms have improved

- If you tested positive for COVID-19 but do not have symptoms stay home until 10 days have passed since your positive viral test
- If you develop symptoms after testing positive, follow the steps for those who are positive and have symptoms.
- COVID-19 vaccines are now available for those age 5 and older, and booster doses are available for many Nevadans.
- If you have questions about the booster dose, the need for a third dose or concerns about vaccination for yourself or a family member please speak to a trusted health care provider.
- To find a clinic or pharmacy offering the COVID-19 vaccine, go to [NVCOVIDFighter.org](https://www.nvcoVIDfighter.org) or call 1-800-401-0946.

OMICRON VARIANT:

- What is so concerning about the Omicron variant?
 - It has a vast number of mutations. It implies a rapid evolution or “leap” in change for this virus.
 - The mutations that this virus has have previously been shown to impact: higher viral load, higher transmissibility and possible immune evasion.
 - It has a large number of mutations in spike protein means that there is concern for vaccine efficacy. Vaccines are made against spike proteins, and if spike changes a lot, there is fear for whether existing vaccines will retain full efficacy.
 - Scientists are gathering data about the new variant and the State continues to urge Nevadans to get vaccinated as quickly as possible.
 - New variants like Omicron only develop when the virus can replicate well and travel from person to person. Vaccination plays a key role in reducing the rate of new variants.
- What are we missing?
 - The information above comes only from the genetic “blueprint” or sequence of the virus.

- More information is needed about the capability of the Omicron variant.
- Should we be concerned about a surge?
 - Yes, but regardless of the variant, respiratory viruses are historically more prevalent in the winter.
- All labs and Public Health entities in the world are much better at detecting variants and genetic surveillance now. As a result, new variants can be found faster.
- Since the variants are identified faster, it is possible that they are identified early enough that mitigation measures will limit their spread.
- Even with the emergence of the Omicron variant, vaccination remains the single best protection against COVID-19, particularly at preventing hospitalization and death.
- Preliminary data from Italy, Israel and South Africa suggest that fully vaccinated individuals generally present with mild illness with the Omicron variant and are less likely to be hospitalized than unvaccinated individuals.
- More information about transmissibility and the degree of vaccine efficacy against the variant will be known in the next few weeks.
- Getting fully vaccinated, boosted and wearing masks are the best tools to prevent the spread of Delta, which remains the most common in the state.
- The Omicron variant has not been detected in Nevada.
- The CDC recommends booster doses for all adults (18+), in addition to strongly encouraging vaccination for everyone that is eligible.

COMPARING CURRENT COVID CONDITIONS IN 2021 TO 2020 HOLIDAY SEASON

- As the fall and winter holiday season is upon us, Nevada's mitigation measures and vaccination efforts continue to work to limit the spread of COVID-19.
- COVID cases are almost 5 times lower than last year and cases have declined 26% over the past two weeks. Nationwide, cases are 2 times lower than last year and rose by 27% in the two weeks before Thanksgiving.

- In 2020, Thanksgiving coincided with Nevada's ongoing winter surge. Cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, reached an all-time high approximately 2 weeks after the holiday.
- By contrast, all of Nevada's key COVID-19 metrics have declined over the past two weeks. Test positivity rate decreased 4%, hospitalizations decreased 7%, and deaths decreased 67%. The State will continue to monitor cases into early December, cases typically surge within the two weeks following holidays.
- These successes are nearly all attributable to the vaccines that have already been administered. Only by continuing to get our population vaccinated, can we continue this trend.

VACCINATION IN 5-11 YEAR OLDS

- As vaccines are the best tool against COVID-19, it's important for all eligible groups to get vaccinated, especially children 5-11 who now have access to the vaccine.
- Even though children are at lower risk of severe COVID-19 than adults, COVID-19 is the eighth leading cause of death for 5-11 year olds in the U.S.
- Pediatric COVID vaccines are ~91% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 in 5-11 year olds, reducing both the risk of severe illness and of spreading COVID-19 to others.
- In Nevada, 7.4% of 5-11 year olds initiated COVID-19 vaccination between November 8-29, slightly behind the national rate of 10%.

FLU ACTIVITY AND VACCINATIONS

- With the arrival of winter also comes the peak of flu season and the CDC is anticipating increases in flu activity this winter and urging everyone 6 months and older to get their flu shot as soon as possible.
- So far, flu activity has been low both in Nevada and nationally this season.
- Nevada is reporting minimal flu activity as of November 20 and zero Nevadans have been hospitalized for influenza so far this season.
- However, flu test positivity increased 84% across the nation over the past two weeks.

- Children and young adults ages 5-24 are primarily driving the rise in cases, accounting for ~89% of recent cases according to CDC.
- In addition to vaccines, other prevention measures such as staying home when sick, covering your nose and mouth, and hand-washing can also prevent the flu.
- If you do experience flu-like symptoms, getting tested quickly can reveal whether you have COVID-19 or flu and is critical to getting the right treatments.
- One strain of flu, H3N2, is increasing in prevalence nationwide. Between the weeks of October 31 and November 6, detected H3 strains increased 3 times throughout the US.
- The H3N2 flu strain is particularly concerning as it evolves rapidly and has been associated with increased hospitalizations in older adults aged 65+.
- Since H3N2 evolves rapidly, past flu vaccines have been less effective against this strain.
- This year's flu vaccine protects against four different strains of flu, including H3N2.
- Past flu vaccines have been 40-60% effective at preventing illness.
- As of November 22, only ~18% of Nevadans are vaccinated against the flu, 27% lower than this time last year and less than half the current national average of 41%.
- All Nevadans 5 and older can safely get the COVID-19 and flu vaccine at the same time this fall, with no wait between shots. The body's immune response and side effects are generally the same when the two vaccines are co-administered.

OSHA STANDARD

- A ruling issued by the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals on November 12 stated Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) could not enforce the Biden Administration's mandatory vaccine or COVID-19 test regulation for businesses with more than 100 employees.
- The ruling does not prohibit individual businesses or organizations from implementing measures for their own employees, and across the nation, it has

been shown that vaccine mandates move the needle on getting more employees vaccinated.

- Vaccines help protect from severe cases of COVID-19, hospitalization or death and are helping put Nevadans back to work.
- The State supports efforts to increase vaccination rates among Nevadans.
- The State has already taken action with similar vaccine or testing policies regarding their own employees - and has implemented a more stringent vaccine requirement for those who work with vulnerable populations. The State encourages others - especially those who work with vulnerable populations - to do the same.
- The indoor mask mandate regardless of vaccination status will continue throughout the holiday season and into the start of the new year.
- The State will be closely monitoring caseloads and hospitalizations, and as always, urging Nevadans to get vaccinated as soon as possible.