



**NEVADA  
HEALTH  
RESPONSE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**COVID-19 Press Bulletin for December 30, 2021**

Carson City, NV — Today, DuAne Young, Policy Director for Governor Steve Sisolak, Melissa Peek-Bullock, State Epidemiologist and Christian Schonlau, Chief Financial Officer of the Nevada State Board of Pharmacy, provided updates on the State's COVID-19 response on a teleconference 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.

**CURRENT SURGE IN NEVADA:**

- Nevada is in the midst of seeing a significant increase in cases that have not been seen since early November of 2020, at the beginning of the winter surge that tested the hospital capacity last year.
- When it comes to hospitalizations, Nevada is seeing increases in both southern and northern Nevada, but nothing significant yet in the rural communities.
- Previously, surges have started in the south, then are seen in the north and ultimately impact rural Nevada.
- The Governor and the State's public health officials cannot stress enough how important it is for all Nevadans who are eligible to get vaccinated AND to get boosted.
- Getting vaccinated provides powerful protection against severe illness hospitalization and death.
- Nevada's health professionals have been working non-stop throughout the pandemic to provide care for patients. The State has taken steps in the last six months to help fortify public health systems.

- The State has continued the mask requirements in indoor settings and crowded outdoor settings, regardless of vaccination status in counties listed as high or substantial transmission risk by the CDC. This has helped slow the spread of COVID-19 in Nevada.
- Masks continue to be required in the majority of counties in the State.
- The State has increased access to treatments - like monoclonal antibodies - for those who do become sick with COVID-19, a measure that is aimed at helping reduce capacity in Nevada's hospitals for those in need of urgent care.
- The State continues education and access efforts as it relates to the COVID-19 vaccine, working to meet every community where they are.
- Vaccines are readily available, and the State continues to work with health districts and community partners to ensure that when Nevadans decide they are ready to be vaccinated, they are available.
- The Governor has also focused on balancing lives and livelihoods.
- The State continues to work with large event organizers to put safety protocols in place so Nevada can host large events and gatherings. That includes Raiders games and conventions like CES.
- Thousands of Nevadans and visitors are planning to ring in the New Year tomorrow on the Las Vegas Strip for the official celebration put on by the Clark County and partners.
- Safety is a partnership - from the very top at the State level all the way down to the individual.

## **OMICRON VARIANT**

- The first known case in Nevada was announced in Las Vegas on December 14, followed by a case in Northern Nevada later that week.
- Genomic sequencing surveillance has been underway in Nevada for quite some time.
- Samples of COVID-positive specimens undergo genomic sequencing at the laboratory to determine the specific variant of the virus.
- As this is a surveillance activity, not all positive tests are sequenced as the sequencing does not necessarily change the course of action but allows us to understand what is circulating in Nevada and at what proportion.

- More information about COVID-19 variant sequencing in the State of Nevada is available from the Nevada State Public Health Lab here: <https://www.nvsarscov2variant.org/>
- Nationally, Omicron has quickly out competed Delta and is now the predominant circulating strain in the U.S. We expected to see the same pattern occur in Nevada in the coming weeks.
- If you become sick or test positive for COVID-19 – stay home and adhere to the isolation measures to prevent further spread.
- The same applies to those that have been exposed.
- The CDC recently updated the recommended isolation period from 10 days to 5 days for those who are asymptomatic. Link: [CDC Updates and Shortens Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Period for General Population](#)
- The change was based on science demonstrating the majority of transmission occurs early in the course of illness.
- People who test positive should isolate for 5 days and, if asymptomatic or have resolving symptoms, at that time, they may leave isolation if they can continue to mask for 5 days to minimize the risk of infecting others.
- Individuals can also consider testing as a prevention measure before gathering, whether that is a laboratory-based test, a point of care test or an over-the-counter self-test.
- Self-tests are supported by CDC as one of several risk-reduction strategies to reduce the chances of COVID-19 transmission. They can be used regardless of vaccination or symptom status.
- Masks, vaccination, social distancing and hand hygiene continue to be important for all Nevadans.
- Cloth masks work well, but for additional protection, consider using an N-95 or KN-95 mask when you are in public places.

## **TREATMENTS:**

- Last week the Food and Drug Administration approved Emergency Use Authorizations for two oral antiviral products to treat COVID-19.
- These medications are Pfizer's Paxlovid and Merck's Molnupiravir.

- Both prevent mild to moderate COVID-19 disease from progressing to severe disease or death in certain patients.
- They both work by inhibiting the COVID-19 virus from replicating itself in the human body.
- The State of Nevada is working hard to ensure all treatment options are available and the Nevada State Board of Pharmacy has worked with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response to make sure Pfizer's Paxlovid pill is available in Nevada as soon as possible.
- At this time, the State has received a very limited quantity of Pfizer's Paxlovid.
- While the State's initial allocations of the medication is limited, the Board will be providing the medication to pre-selected pharmacy sites for use in long-term care and skilled nursing facilities.
- Similar to the vaccine rollout, the State will be receiving small allocations of the medication in the beginning, with the focus on providing the treatment to Nevada's vulnerable populations.
- Those who fall into this category and test positive for COVID-19 should speak to a trusted health care professional about the possibility of using the treatment.
- The State has not yet received doses of Merck's Molnupiravir – it will be allocated to retail pharmacies when available.
- Masks, vaccinations, social distancing and hand hygiene are still the best ways to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.
- The State continues to ask all eligible Nevadans to be vaccinated, but if you test positive for COVID-19 we now have more options through the COVID-19 pill and monoclonal antibody treatment for some patients.

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