



HEALTH ALERT

Gregory Cherpes, MD
ODP Medical Director



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COVID-19 Safety and Treatment Reminders

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) is sending out this Health Alert as a reminder that COVID-19 continues to have high levels of community spread in Pennsylvania and elsewhere across the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that Omicron, the latest COVID-19 variant of concern, is highly contagious and has quickly become the dominant strain in the US, though the Delta variant remains present. As of December 25, 2021, the Omicron variant was estimated to be responsible for nearly 59% of the COVID-19 cases.

Current vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths due to infection with the Omicron variant. However, breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated are likely to occur. With other variants, like Delta, vaccines have remained effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. The recent emergence of Omicron further emphasizes the importance of vaccination and boosters.

The CDC reminds us of the tools to fight COVID-19, including the Omicron variant:

Vaccines

- Vaccines remain the best public health measure to protect people from COVID-19, slow transmission, and reduce the likelihood of new variants emerging.
- COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death.

- Scientists are currently investigating Omicron, including how protected fully vaccinated people will be against infection, hospitalization, and death.
- **The CDC recommends that everyone 5 years and older protect themselves from COVID-19 by getting fully vaccinated.**
- The CDC recommends that **everyone ages 18 years and older should get a booster shot** at least two months after their initial J&J/Janssen vaccine or six months after completing their primary COVID-19 vaccination series of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna.

Masks

- Masks offer protection against all viral variants causing COVID-19, as well as other illnesses, such as the flu.
- The CDC continues to recommend wearing a mask in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high community transmission, regardless of vaccination status.
- The CDC provides advice about masks for people who want to learn more about what type of mask is right for them depending on their circumstances:
 - [Your Guide to Masks | CDC](#)

Stay 6 feet away from others

- Inside your home
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - If possible, maintain 6 feet between the person who is sick and other household members.
- Outside your home

- Remember that some people without symptoms may be able to spread the virus.
- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arm lengths) from other people, especially if you are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Wash your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Testing

- Tests can tell you if you are currently infected with COVID-19.
- Two types of tests are used to test for current infection: nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs) and antigen tests. NAAT and antigen tests can only tell you if you have a current infection.
- Additional tests would be needed to determine if your infection was caused by Omicron.
- Self-Testing for Individuals Living in a Private Home
 - Self-tests can be used at home or anywhere, are easy to use, and produce rapid results.
 - If the self-test has a positive result, stay home, or isolate for 10 days, wear a mask if you have contact with others, and call your healthcare provider.
 - If you have any questions about your self-test result, call your healthcare provider or public health department.

Treatment

If you or someone you care for develops COVID-19, there are treatment options. It is important to discuss the treatment options with a healthcare provider. Factors such as the course of the illness, severity, and other individual risk factors will influence the available options for treatment. Medications used to treat COVID-19 under Emergency Use Authorization include monoclonal antibodies, dexamethasone, and most recently 2 oral antiviral medications. The healthcare practitioner will help determine the best treatment options. It is very important that the healthcare practitioner be informed of any positive COVID-19 testing results, even if the individual is without any symptoms.

Quarantine and Isolation

Quarantine describes the process of staying away from others when you have had close contact with a person who has COVID-19. Isolation describes the process of staying away from others when you have COVID-19, with or without symptoms. The recommendations for quarantine and isolation due to COVID-19 have changed over time as scientific knowledge has changed. These recommendations have again been updated recently. **There are different recommendations for healthcare personnel and for the general population.** ODP service providers are directed to the guidelines for healthcare personnel found in the PA Department of Health's Health Alert Network document 614 – 12/28/21-UPD- Update: Return to Work Healthcare Personnel with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 ([2021-PAHAN-614-12-28-UPD-Return Work HCP b.pdf](#)) for guidance related to quarantine and isolation recommendations for direct support personnel. Current guidance for the general population is in the table below.

The Following Table is the CDC’s Updated Guidance for Isolation and Quarantine for the General Population:

If You Test Positive for COVID – 19: <i>Isolate</i>	
Everyone, regardless of vaccination status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay home for 5 days. If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your house. Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days. <p><i>If you have a fever, continue to stay home until your fever resolves.</i></p>
If You Are Exposed to Someone with COVID – 19: <i>Quarantine</i>	
<p>If you:</p> <p>Have been boosted</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Completed the primary series of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear a mask around others for 10 days. Test on day 5, if possible. <p><i>If you develop symptoms get a test and stay home.</i></p>

<p>If you:</p> <p>Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and are not boosted</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Are unvaccinated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home for 5 days. After that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days. • If you can't quarantine you must wear a mask for 10 days. • Test on day 5 if possible. <p><i>If you develop symptoms get a test and stay home</i></p>
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For more information, see the resources below:

- [How to Protect Yourself & Others | CDC](#)
- [Your Guide to Masks | CDC](#)
- [When and How to Wash Your Hands | Handwashing | CDC](#)
- [What to Do If You Are Sick | CDC](#)
- [CDC Updates and Shortens Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Period for General Population | CDC Online Newsroom | CDC](#)
- [2021-PAHAN-613-12-23-UPD-COVID treatment.pdf](#)
- [2021-PAHAN-614-12-28-UPD-Return Work HCP b.pdf](#)