



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Updates

[Medford, Oregon] — As of December 5, there have been 16 states that have detected at least one case of COVID-19 illness caused by the Omicron variant, including neighboring states of Washington and California.¹

While there is still much to be learned about the new variant, we know that the Omicron variant will likely spread more easily than the original SARS-CoV-2 virus.¹ How easily it spreads or how severe the new variant is compared to the Delta variant is unknown at this time.¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) expects that anyone with the Omicron infection can spread the virus to others, even if they are vaccinated or don't have symptoms.¹

Current vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalizations and deaths due to infection with the Omicron variant. Breakthrough infections in people are likely to occur in people who are fully vaccinated.¹ With other variants, like Delta, vaccines have remained effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death. The recent emergence of Omicron further emphasizes the importance of COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters.

“We do have the tools to fight the Omicron variant,” states Dr. Jim Shames, Health Officer for Jackson County Public Health. “Vaccines remain the best tool we have to protect people from COVID-19, to slow the transmission, and help reduce the chances of other variants from emerging.” It is recommended that everyone 5 years and older get vaccinated and everyone 18 years and older get a booster shot.

Jackson County Public Health is advising people to celebrate the holidays safer this year. “We know how quickly things can change. With the emergence of the new variant, it will be important that everyone be on alert, get vaccinated, and use other strategies such as wearing a mask to keep yourself and loved ones safe this holiday season,” says Dr. Jim Shames.

Safer Ways to Celebrate the Holidays

Holiday traditions are important for families and children. There are several ways to enjoy holiday traditions and protect your health. Because many generations tend to gather to celebrate holidays, the best way to minimize COVID-19 risk and keep your family and friends safer is to get vaccinated if you're eligible.

Here are safer ways to celebrate the holidays:

- Protect those not yet eligible for vaccination, such as young children, by getting yourself, and other eligible people around them vaccinated.
- Wear well-fitting masks over your nose and mouth if you are in public indoor settings if you are not fully vaccinated.
 - Even fully vaccinated people should wear a mask in public indoor settings in communities with substantial to high transmission.
 - Outdoors is safer than indoors.
 - Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated spaces.
 - If you are sick or have symptoms, don't host or attend a gathering.
 - Get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have a close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

If you are considering traveling for a holiday or event, visit CDC's [Travel](#) page to help you decide what is best for you and your family. CDC still recommends delaying travel until you are [fully vaccinated](#).

Special considerations:

- People who have a condition or are taking medications that weaken their immune system may not be fully protected even if they are fully vaccinated and have received an [additional dose](#). They should continue to take all [precautions recommended for unvaccinated people, including wearing a well-fitted mask](#), until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider.
- You might choose to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission if a member of your household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is unvaccinated.
- If you are gathering with a group of people from multiple households and potentially from different parts of the country, you could consider additional precautions (e.g., avoiding crowded indoor spaces before travel, taking a test) in advance of gathering to further reduce risk.
- Do NOT put a mask on children younger than 2 years old.

By working together, we can enjoy safer holidays, travel, and protect our own health as well as the health of our family and friends.

Weekly Number of New COVID-19 Cases

For week 48 (November 28 –December 4), Jackson County Public Health reported 405 new COVID-19 cases. This is a 68% increase from the previous week.

COVID-19 Hospitalizations for Region 5 (Jackson and Josephine Counties)

As of 9:00 a.m. on December 6, 2021, the number of hospitalized patients with COVID-19 is 54, and there are 16 patients with COVID-19 in the intensive care unit.

The total number of patients in hospital beds may fluctuate between report times. The numbers do not reflect admissions per day nor the length of hospital stay. Staffing limitations are not captured in this data and may further limit bed capacity.

For more information:

- The public can call 211-information with general questions
- OHA Emerging Respiratory Disease page: www.healthoregon.org/coronavirus
- CDC COVID-19 page: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- OHA COVID-19 Vaccine: <https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-vaccine>
- CDC COVID-19 Vaccine: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>
- Jackson County HHS Vaccine: <https://jacksoncountyor.org/hhs/COVID-19/COVID-19-News/covid-19-vaccine>
- CDC Travel within the U.S.: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>
- Jackson County Health and Human Services: <http://jacksoncountyor.org/hhs/COVID-19>
- Oregon COVID-19 Testing Location Finder: <https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing>

References

1. Omicron Variant: What You Need to Know. cdc.gov. Updated Dec. 5, 2021. Accessed Dec 6, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/omicron-variant.html>

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