

Officials Encourage Boosters as COVID-19 Hospitalizations Rise

NCDHHS aligns with CDC Guidance and outlines what individuals should do if they are exposed to or contract COVID-19.

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With hospitalizations due to COVID-19 rising, boosters remain the most important thing you can do to keep yourself and your loved ones out of the hospital, officials with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services noted Wednesday.

Hospitalizations of COVID-19 cases in North Carolina have increased by over 20% in the last three days. Hospitals reported 331 admissions in the last 24 hours, an increase of over 40% from Monday's seven-day rolling average of 232 admissions per day.

"Now is the time to get your booster shot," said Kody H. Kinsley, Chief Deputy Secretary for Health and Incoming DHHS Secretary. "We have plenty of vaccine in state, and getting a booster shot, or getting vaccinated if you aren't already, dramatically decreases the risk of severe illness and hospitalization from the Omicron variant."

NCDHHS has also adopted [updated guidance](#) from Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, which outlines what individuals should do if they contract or are exposed to COVID-19 to help slow the spread to others:

If you have symptoms, regardless of vaccination status – get tested and isolate from others while you wait for a result. If you are not able to be tested, follow the guidance below as if you are positive.

If you are exposed to someone with COVID-19 and are

- **Not vaccinated** – stay away from others for 5 days, get tested on day 5 after exposure, and if you test negative, return to normal activities while wearing a mask for 5 additional days.
- **Vaccinated and eligible for a booster, but not yet been boosted** – stay away from others for 5 days, get tested on day 5 after exposure, and if you test negative, return to normal activities while wearing a mask for 5 additional days.
- **Vaccinated, and have either received your booster or are not yet eligible for a booster** – you do not need to stay away from others, but you should wear a mask for 10 days.

If you test positive, regardless of vaccination status, and

- **Do not have symptoms** – isolate yourself from others for 5 days, then wear a mask for 5 additional days when you return to normal activities.
- **Have symptoms** – isolate yourself from others until you are fever-free and your symptoms are improving. You should isolate for at least 5 days since your symptoms began. Once you stop isolating, you should wear a mask for 5 additional days.

People who have received two doses of either the Pfizer or Moderna mRNA vaccines are eligible for a booster shot after 6 months. Those who got a Johnson & Johnson single-dose vaccine initially should

receive a booster after 2 months. According to the CDC, those who are eligible for boosters and have not received them should follow the stricter guidance for quarantine and masks.

The CDC guidance differentiates between those who are boosted and those who are eligible but not boosted. It cites initial data from South Africa showing that two mRNA doses provide 35 percent protection against infection. With a booster shot, that increases to 75 percent.

In all cases, a well-fitting mask ([CDC guidance](#)) is recommended. If possible, wear a surgical or procedure mask, a KN95 or an N95 respirator. In general, the CDC recommends all unvaccinated people 2 years old or older wear a mask indoors. For testing resources, visit ncdhhs.gov/gettested to find a community event or location to get tested. Please do not visit the emergency room to get tested.

Vaccines are available for everyone 5 years and older. To find a vaccine or booster vaccine near you visit MySpot.nc.gov. More information on the CDC's guidance is available [online](#).