



Sonoma County
Key Messages: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
January 5, 2022

Key Messages are updated weekly, and used for County messaging to the community. Frequently Asked Questions and other relevant information is available at SoCoEmergency.org.

Vaccine Distribution

Milestones: As of today, 921,842 doses have been administered to Sonoma County residents.

Residents fully vaccinated: 363,998 - equal to 77.4 percent of the county's eligible population.

Residents partially vaccinated: 36,249 - equal to 7.7 percent of the county's eligible population

All California residents 5 and older are now eligible for vaccination against COVID-19. As the Omicron variant spreads, our focus is on encouraging booster shots and testing. First and second doses are still vital, but we need to increase our rate of booster shots administered because of the protection they offer against the worst outcomes of COVID — severe illness, hospitalization and death. While breakthrough COVID cases in vaccinated people are rising, unvaccinated people are exposed to the greatest risks. People who are unvaccinated are 17 times more likely to be hospitalized here if they get COVID and they are 14 times more likely to die from COVID-related illness. More than 161,000 local residents have received a booster shot to date.

Children ages 5 to 17 can only receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The county is working to get more of our eligible children vaccinated and protected. To date, 36.7 percent of the newly eligible children ages 5 to 11 in the county now are partially or fully vaccinated -- more than 13,600 children, more than 8,000 of whom are fully vaccinated. Teens ages 16 and 17 are now eligible for a booster shot of the Pfizer vaccine. The Food and Drug Administration on Monday authorized booster doses of Pfizer's vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds, a group that became eligible for initial shots in May. Regulators also shortened by a month the amount of time that adults and adolescents should wait between second and third doses, allowing them to seek booster shots five months after second injections.

More than 400,000 residents have received at least one dose -- 81 percent of the county's total population. That means 85 percent of our eligible 5 and older population is now fully or partially vaccinated. By comparison, 71.3 percent of the eligible California population is fully vaccinated with 8.4 percent partially vaccinated. Nationally, 78.4 percent of the eligible population is fully or partially vaccinated.

The county urges anyone who tests positive using an at-home antigen test to report the result by calling the county's COVID hotline at 707-565-4667. The county is developing an online form for self-reporting via the county website that should be ready next week. Those who do not have internet access or need assistance will still be able to use the hotline to report.

The County's [vaccine clinics page](#) is continually updated. The [pop-up calendar](#) shows what clinics are operating each day. The county's [testing page](#) makes it easy to find a site and book an appointment.

Current Sonoma County metrics:

- Our rate of new daily cases per 100,000 population is 56.3.
- Our case rate for unvaccinated individuals is 114 per 100,000 compared with 27.7 for vaccinated residents.
- Our overall testing positivity rate is 13.7 percent.
- Our equity metric testing positivity rate is 14.1 percent.

Local developments, including update to Board of Supervisors

We are experiencing an expected surge in cases, especially among the unvaccinated. Case rates are expected to keep climbing for the next two to three weeks, fueled by Omicron and holiday gatherings. In early December, we were averaging less than 40 cases a day. Now we are seeing 200 to 300 per day. At the height of the Delta surge this summer, our case rate was 34 per day per 100,000 and testing positivity was 8.3 percent. During last winter's surge, our case rate reached 54 per day per 100,000 and our testing positivity topped out at 9.6 percent. And we are likely not yet at the peak of the Omicron surge. There are encouraging trends. Our high vaccination rate is an important reason why outcomes are not as bad as in other stages of the pandemic. There are currently 34 people hospitalized with COVID in the county compared with 84 at the height of the Delta surge and 104 last January. Only six patients are in the ICU with COVID, compared to 24 at times last summer and 26 last winter. People are not ending up in the intensive care unit like they were, and COVID deaths are a rarity these days. When we do have a tragic COVID death in the community, it is usually

in an unvaccinated individual with underlying conditions. That said, local hospitals and health care providers are dealing with staffing issues because of the number of workers testing positive, which mirrors state and national trends. The unvaccinated still account for most hospitalizations here. Health officials say it is vital to keep doing what we can to minimize new cases and hospitalizations during this surge. We know what works. Get boosted and vaccinated. Wear a good, well-fitting mask. Increase ventilation. Stay home if you're sick. Practice social distancing.

- On Tuesday, 34 COVID patients were in Sonoma County hospitals, twice the number before Christmas. Six patients were in ICU beds.
- Two COVID-related deaths have been reported for December in the county. The county has reported 98 COVID deaths since July 1 after just one COVID death in May and four in June. Deaths typically lag hospitalizations by a month or more.
- Nearly all of the 418 reported COVID-19 deaths that have occurred in Sonoma County have been unvaccinated residents.
- New daily U.S. cases have averaged 547,000 for the past seven days, up 250 percent in two weeks, according to a [New York Times database](#). Daily U.S. COVID deaths are averaging about 1,300 and have remained stable for two weeks. The United States has recorded 828,000 COVID-19 deaths.
- In California, new cases also are surging, eclipsing the record levels reported a year ago. The state on Tuesday reported a backlog of 237,084 new cases, a total that includes four days of data. That resulted in a statewide seven-day average of 50,267 new cases, easily eclipsing the high case counts seen during last winter's deadly COVID-19 wave, according to data compiled by the Los Angeles Times.
- The rate of tests in California coming back positive reached a seven-day rate of 20.4 percent, the highest during the pandemic so far, according to the California Department of Public Health.

Dr. Sundari Mase, Sonoma County's public health officer, Dr. Urmila Shende, the county's vaccine chief, and other top county health officials provided a COVID update on Tuesday to the Board of Supervisors. Highlights:

- Eligible residents need to get boosted to be fully protected against Omicron. Immunity starts to wane six months after the first two doses. Officials are seeing large increases in post-vaccination infections of people who have not received a booster. Anyone who has waited to get vaccinated should do so as soon as possible.
- State modelling shows that higher rates of booster shots are crucial to avoiding local hospital capacity issues. In Sonoma County, 65

percent of eligible residents 50 and older have received a booster and 52.8 percent of eligible residents 16 and older.

- Demand for testing after the holidays is making it difficult to get tested at a site or to obtain at-home tests. Officials recognize how frustrating this can be, especially for parents as children return to school, and urge patience. The county is working to increase the availability of testing, both PCR and antigen, and the state and federal governments hope to supply more free at-home tests soon. The state is sending at-home test kits directly to the Sonoma County Office of Education for distribution.
- Health officials don't want people with symptoms standing in long lines for a test. They suggest they stay home and try to schedule a test.
- The county also is seeing increased demand for vaccine doses at clinics. County public health requested and received additional staffing help from the state to meet that demand. State staff will be used to expand capacity at school-based vaccination sites.
- Gatherings are responsible for 50 percent of known sources of transmission of COVID in the county.

Upgrade your mask, health officials urge

Masks remain a key tool to reduce transmission of the virus. While cloth masks can stop large droplets exhaled by an infected person, a surgical mask or other FDA-approved mask are the best options because they also filter smaller aerosols and particles that transmit the COVID-19 virus. "Given how contagious the Omicron variant is proving to be, cloth masks are just not as effective in stopping the spread of the virus," said Dr. Sundari Mase, Sonoma County's public health officer. "We recommend that everyone upgrade to a surgical mask or something equivalent."

- The best masks for preventing COVID-19 include the N95, KN95 and KF94, according to an update on Tuesday by the state. If you don't have access to one of these masks, wear a surgical mask or a surgical mask with a cloth mask on top.
- If you choose a fabric mask, opt for one with three or more cloth layers.
- No matter what kind of mask you wear, check the fit by avoiding gaps above the nose or on the sides.

What to do if you contract COVID

With many people testing positive these days, and with evolving federal recommendations, there is some confusion about what to do if you have contracted COVID. If you test positive, the first thing you should do is isolate yourself for at least five days to protect your health and avoid infecting others.

- While isolating, stay in a separate room from those not infected. Use a separate bathroom if you can. Wear a mask around others, even at home, and ask others in your home to do the same. Use an N-95, KF-94, or a three-ply surgical mask if possible. Open the windows, when possible. If your residence has an HVAC system, make sure it has a fresh filter.
- Get a test on day five, and if it is negative you can end your isolation.
- The California Department of Public Health recommends a rapid antigen test, not a PCR test, to determine if you can exit isolation.
- If you can't get tested, you can end your isolation after 10 days if you don't have symptoms.
- If you used an at-home test, you should report the results to the county health department at 707-565-4667.
- Notify close contacts that they've been exposed. A close contact is someone who spent at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period within 6 feet of a person who tested positive for COVID.
- People who are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 unless they have symptoms. However, fully vaccinated people should get tested five to seven days after their exposure, even if they don't have symptoms and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative.
- Unvaccinated people should stay home for 14 days after your last contact with a person who has COVID-19. If you have symptoms, immediately self-isolate and contact your health care provider.

Seek medical care if you display the following symptoms:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- Confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds (or an abnormally low reading on a pulse oximeter, if you have one).

CDC shortens isolation and quarantine periods: What that means

The CDC on Dec. 27 shortened by half the isolation period for people who contract the coronavirus, saying that those without symptoms could safely resume mixing with others just five days after their positive test results. CDC officials said the guidance is in keeping with growing evidence that people with the coronavirus are most infectious in the two days before and three days after symptoms develop. The guidance is not a mandate; it's a recommendation to employers and state and local officials. The isolation rules are for people who are infected. They are the same for people who are unvaccinated, partly vaccinated, fully vaccinated or boosted. On Tuesday, the CDC issued an explanation of the difference between what it means to isolate and quarantine and why it recently recommended shorter periods for both. The update includes what to do in specific settings and for different circumstances.

The California Department of Public Health has updated its guidance to align with the recommended isolation and quarantine time frames from the CDC. In this time of uncertainty due to Omicron, California added additional testing recommendations to exit isolation and quarantine and improved masking measures to protect the health of all Californians. The state recommends a negative test before ending isolation after five days. The new CDC isolation guidelines say:

- The clock starts the day you test positive.
- An infected person should go into isolation for five days, instead of the previously recommended 10.
- At the end of five days, if you have no symptoms, you can return to normal activities but must wear a mask everywhere — even at home around others — for at least five more days.
- If you still have symptoms after isolating for five days, stay home until you feel better and then start five days of wearing a mask at all times.

The quarantine rules are for people who were in close contact with an infected person but not infected themselves. For quarantine, the clock starts the day someone is alerted that they may have been exposed to the virus.

- Previously, the CDC said people who were not fully vaccinated and who came in close contact with an infected person should stay home for at least 10 days.
- Now the agency is saying only people who got booster shots can skip quarantine if they wear masks in all settings for at least 10 days.
- Previously, people who were fully vaccinated — which the CDC has defined as having two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine — could be exempt from quarantine.

Omicron updates

The CDC on Tuesday estimated that the Omicron variant now accounts for 95.4 percent of COVID cases in the United States. Delta accounts for just 4 percent. A month ago, Omicron made up less than 1 percent of U.S. cases. Sonoma County has sequenced 59 cases of Omicron to date. Genetic sequencing does not represent real-time data, as sequencing generally occurs several days or more after initial tests are positive for COVID-19.

- The World Health Organization on Nov. 26 deemed Omicron a “variant of concern” after it was first identified in Botswana and South Africa.
- Even as new cases surge locally and throughout the state and nation, Omicron looks substantially milder than other versions of the virus. That is an encouraging trend. An analysis of patients in Houston found that Omicron patients were about one-third as likely to need hospitalization as Delta patients. In Britain, people with Omicron were about half as likely to require hospital care, according to a government report. Hospitalizations are nonetheless rising in the U.S., because Omicron is so contagious. Many hospitals are running short of beds and staff, partly because of COVID-related absences.
- Omicron is not just less likely to send somebody to the hospital. Even among people who need hospital care, symptoms are milder on average than among people who were hospitalized in previous waves. It appears Omicron does not attack the lungs as earlier versions of COVID did. Omicron tends to be focused in the nose and throat, causing fewer patients to have breathing problems or need a ventilator.
- In the U.S., mortality trends typically trail case trends by about three weeks — which means the Omicron surge, which began more than a month ago, should be visible in the death counts. Deaths have remained relatively stable over the past month.
- Booster doses of both the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are likely to offer a substantial increase in protection against Omicron.
- All vaccines still seem to provide a significant degree of protection against serious illness from Omicron, which is the most crucial goal. But only the Pfizer and Moderna shots, when reinforced by a booster, appear to have initial success at stopping infections.

County Superior Court postpones trials that haven't started

The Sonoma County Superior Court issued an emergency order delaying all civil and criminal trials not currently in progress until March due to the Omicron-fueled surge. All criminal jury trials that have not begun will be postponed to after March 1 or later, according to the order signed by Presiding Judge Shelly Averill on Monday. Civil jury trial proceedings are

delayed even later, to after March 31. The emergency order outlines other safety measures.

- Everyone in the courthouse regardless of vaccination status must mask at all times, including employees, staff, attorneys, witnesses and the public.
- Judges may allow a defendant to briefly lower their mask for the purposes of identification for the record.

County urges employers to require proof of booster

Employers should immediately require all workers to get a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, if eligible for one, or get tested at least twice weekly for COVID under new guidelines issued Dec. 28 by Dr. Sundari Mase, Sonoma County health officer. The guidelines are voluntary but strongly recommended to help mitigate a surge in cases and protect the health of workers, their families and vulnerable community members. "COVID-19 cases are increasing again in Sonoma County, but we can keep both our community and our economy healthy if employers require workers to get a booster shot as soon as they are eligible for one," Dr. Mase said.

In addition to twice-weekly testing, employers should consider requiring unvaccinated and unboosted employees, if eligible for a booster, to wear an FDA-cleared surgical mask or respirator in indoor work settings.

Dr. Mase issued two health orders last month requiring booster shots or twice-weekly testing for local school employees and for personnel working in fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services, pharmacies, dental offices and temporary disaster shelters in Sonoma County. The mandatory orders take effect Feb. 1, although Public Health highly recommends that employers covered by the orders immediately begin testing unvaccinated and unboosted employees at least twice weekly.

The county mandate expanded a state public health order requiring health care workers, adult care facilities and direct care workers, and correctional facility and detention center health care staff to receive booster shots.

Employers can require workers to be vaccinated, including having a booster.

The County of Sonoma, the region's largest employer, is evaluating its COVID-19 vaccination policy and procedures with the goal of implementing Dr. Mase's latest recommendation for its workforce as soon as possible.

The health orders and guidance are on the county's [health orders page](#).

Booster update: Pfizer booster authorized for 12- to 15-year-olds

The CDC [recommended](#) on Tuesday that Americans who received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine seek a booster shot five months after the second shot, and not wait six months, as earlier guidance had said. The agency also

recommended that some immunocompromised children ages 5 to 11 receive an additional primary vaccine shot 28 days after the second shot, matching the guidance for similar people 12 and older. Pfizer's vaccine is the only one authorized for pediatric use in the United States. The endorsements come on the heels of the [authorization of the same steps by the Food and Drug Administration](#) on Monday.

- The FDA also cleared 12- to 15-year-olds to receive boosters of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The CDC's vaccine advisory committee is meeting today to discuss whether to recommend that step. The CDC and FDA share responsibility for the nation's vaccine policy. If the committee follows the FDA's lead, the CDC's director, Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, is expected to quickly sign off on the recommendation.
- 16- and 17-year-olds became eligible for Pfizer booster shots on Dec. 9. Sonoma County and other county public health agencies across the Bay Area on Dec. 17 [urged everyone eligible](#) to get vaccinated and, if eligible, get a booster right away to protect against the Omicron variant.
- Those 18 and older can use [any COVID-19 vaccine](#) approved by the federal government.
- Anyone 18 or older can choose either a Pfizer or Moderna booster six months after their last dose. For anyone who got the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, the wait already was just two months.
- People can mix-and-match boosters from any company.

Other key information regarding booster shots:

- Individuals should contact their primary care doctor, local pharmacy or visit [MyTurn.ca.gov](https://www.myturn.ca.gov) to schedule a booster shot. Vaccine supplies may be limited at the county's fixed and pop-up clinics.
- 161,771 boosters have been [administered in Sonoma County](#) since they were authorized for the first groups in September.
- 64,268 boosters have gone to those ages 65 and older.
- More than 96,000 booster doses have been administered to residents under age 65.
- The [CDC reports](#) that 71.6 million fully vaccinated people have received an additional vaccine dose in the United States.
- The Moderna booster is half the size of the primary dose administered.

CDC tweaks how it refers to vaccination schedules and boosters

The CDC today said it was not changing its definition of full vaccination against the coronavirus. The agency did [change its emphasis](#) on the appropriate regimen. The CDC said that three doses of Pfizer or Moderna's vaccines should be considered "up to date" inoculations, and that Johnson &

Johnson recipients should receive a second dose, preferably of Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech, to also be considered “up to date” with COVID vaccines. The federal government permits people to mix and match brands for boosters. The move amounted to a recommendation from federal health officials that Americans should change how they talk about vaccinations, as boosters are now recommended for all adults. “Consistent with how public health has historically viewed or even talked about how we recommend vaccines, we are now recommending that individuals stay up to date with additional doses that they are eligible for,” Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, the CDC director, said today. “The technical definition of ‘fully vaccinated’ — two doses of an mRNA vaccine or one dose of the J & J vaccine — has not changed,” Kristen Nordlund, a CDC spokeswoman, said in a statement. Federal officials have typically referred to people being considered “fully vaccinated” as two weeks after a first dose of Johnson & Johnson or a second dose of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines.

Gov. Newsom announces booster mandate for health workers

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Dec. 22 announced [new booster requirements and testing measures](#) as the Omicron variant becomes the dominant COVID-19 strain in the nation. The booster requirement for health care workers will mitigate potential staffing shortages while helping to safeguard the state’s hospital capacity and protect the health and safety of Californians, he said. “Two doses are great. A booster is a game changer,” Newsom said.

- By Feb. 1, health care workers and all employees in high-risk congregate settings, including nursing homes, will be required to get their booster.
- To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in schools, the state is also increasing the availability of at-home tests so K-12 public-school students can be tested as they return to school from winter break. In early December, the California Department of Public Health distributed 2 million tests to schools for this purpose. CDPH will expand those efforts by providing one to two rapid tests for every student. CDPH will work with local education and health partners to distribute those test kits as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- The state will also be expanding antigen test availability and expanding hours of operation at state-sponsored OptumServe sites that are already at capacity.
- The state health department is distributing an additional 6 million tests to community partners serving disproportionately impacted Californians and 4 million to local health jurisdictions.
- [Additional information](#) related to the governor’s announcement.

Sonoma County rescinds face mask exemption

Sonoma County on Dec. 29 joined four other Bay Area counties in rescinding exemptions to local public health orders that allowed stable groups of fully vaccinated people to remove their masks indoors in some workplaces, gyms, churches and other public settings. Everyone, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a mask in all indoor public settings, effective Dec. 30. Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin and San Francisco counties and the city of Berkeley removed similar exemptions in a coordinated effort to blunt a regional surge in COVID-19 cases. Sonoma County has required facial coverings in most indoor public settings since August.

The action fully aligns Sonoma County with the [statewide mask mandate issued Dec. 15](#) by the California Department of Public Health. The statewide indoor mask order will last a month, expiring on Jan. 15. CDPH had allowed counties with existing mask orders to retain their local exemptions. Sonoma County decided to eliminate its exemption and require masks in all indoor public settings following a sharp increase in local COVID-19 cases.

President Biden's response includes 500 million free rapid tests

President Biden on Dec. 21 said the government will 500 million rapid coronavirus tests and distribute them free to Americans; create new vaccination and testing sites; and send military medical professionals to help hospitals nationwide. He said, as he has in the past, that there was no need for lockdowns now. "This is not March of 2020. Two hundred million people are vaccinated. We're prepared; we know more." The Biden administration is working on a website where people will be able to order test kits for free, Coronavirus Response Coordinator Jeff Zients said [in a Dec. 29 press briefing](#). "The first deliveries from manufacturers will start in January. We'll set up a free and easy system, including a new website, to get these tests out to Americans," he said. More details will come "in the days and weeks ahead."

Rapid testing urged by local health officials

Residents are urged by county health officials to make use of at-home antigen tests, which officials know are in short supply due to high demand. The county encourages their use along with the more sensitive PCR test. PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests cannot be done at home and results typically take at least a day. If you will be traveling or attending a gathering, you should take a PCR test three days before your event, and then a rapid test on the day of the event or the day before to confirm your status. [How to use rapid home tests](#), what's on the market and how they work.

Sonoma State to require boosters for students, staff

California State University said on Dec. 22 that it will require students, faculty and staff at its 23 campuses, including Sonoma State, to get booster shots for the spring semester amid concerns about the Omicron variant.

- The mandate, which allows for medical and religious exemptions, requires boosters by Feb. 28, or six months after the final dose of vaccination.
- Sonoma State University has 8,700 students. The California State University system has 485,000 students and 55,000 faculty and staff.
- The announcement came a day after the University of California announced a similar mandate for its 10 campuses.
- Santa Rosa Junior College President Frank Chong said he expects a booster decision this month after SRJC returns from break.

Update on Sonoma County's pediatric vaccine campaign

More than 36 percent of the county's eligible children ages 5 to 11 have received at least one dose since the vaccine became available in early November. Twenty-two percent of those children are now fully vaccinated. Parents are encouraged to reach out to their pediatrician or a local pharmacy to find a vaccine for their children now that the CDC has endorsed the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. Pharmacy appointments can be made through [Myturn.ca.gov](https://myturn.ca.gov).

Dozens of vaccination clinics have been held at designated schools throughout the county to serve people who do not have convenient or affordable access to healthcare providers. More than 40 such clinics are planned. Several school-based clinics are scheduled over the next week as school resumes. A list [of upcoming clinics](#) is on the County Office of Education website along with information for parents. Doses for those 12 and older will be available at those clinics.

Local public health leaders, doctors, health clinics, schools, pharmacies and community groups are working together to educate families about the vaccine's safety and benefits and to ensure vaccines are distributed as quickly, safely and equitably. Webinars for parents in English and Spanish are available on the [county's YouTube channel](#).

- The county's pediatric vaccine campaign is planned with a focus on equity. The sites for school-based clinics are in areas with high case rates, a high number of English learners, and with lower vaccination rates. Those doses are intended for those school populations but no one will be turned away who is eligible for a vaccine.
- All doses will be available at no cost to children or their parents.

- Parents are asked to bring a photo ID with date of birth as well as medical and prescription insurance card (if insured). Nobody will be turned away for lack of ID.
- Consent forms will be required if a child is not with a parent or guardian; consent forms are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- The campaign seeks to vaccinate half the eligible children ages 5 to 11 by Jan. 31, and 70 percent by Feb. 28.
- The CDC on Nov. 2 endorsed the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. Children receive one-third of the dose authorized for those 12 and older, delivered by smaller needles and stored in smaller vials. A second dose will be necessary, three weeks after the first.
- The FDA authorized the Pfizer vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds in May.
- COVID-19 cases among U.S. children have reached the highest case count ever reported since the start of the pandemic. For the week ending Dec. 30, more than 325,000 child COVID cases were reported. This is a 64 percent increase over the week ending Dec. 23 and an almost doubling of case counts from the two weeks prior. Nearly 8 million children have tested positive for COVID, representing 1 in 10 children, according to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).
- Dr. Brian Prystowsky, a local Sutter Health pediatrician, [explains the benefits of the pediatric vaccine](#) in this video.
- Vaccine testimonials by local parents of children who received the pediatric vaccine are [now available](#) on the county's YouTube channel.
- [Vaccine testimonials](#) by doctors, students and local parents are also available on the Sonoma County Office of Education website.

New state rules for visitors to hospitals, long-term care settings

Given the transmissibility of the Omicron variant, the risk of outbreaks in long-term care settings is of particular concern given the medical vulnerability of residents in such settings. The state determined that amendments to the original State Public Health Officer Order of Aug. 26, 2021, to make boosters mandatory and to require additional testing of visitors eligible for boosters who are not yet boosted, are necessary at this critical time for hospitals and long-term care settings, including skilled nursing facilities and residential care facilities. The [health order was issued last week](#) and takes effect on Friday (Jan. 7).

Local vaccination strategy and availability

The County and its health partners are collaborating to make vaccines available where and when it is most convenient and where they are most needed. The county's [vaccination calendar](#) is continually updated. Residents who need help making an appointment can call the hotline at 707-565-4667 in English and Spanish.

In addition to pop-up clinics, multi-day clinics include:

- Sutter operates a daily clinic at 2360 Mendocino Ave. in Santa Rosa from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- The Roseland Community Center clinic is operated by Fox Home Health at 779 Sebastopol Road. It is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (ages 5-plus). No appointment needed for first, second or booster shots.
- Rohnert Park Community Center clinic at 5401 Snyder Lane is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (ages 5-plus) Appointments needed.
- Alliance Medical Center's clinic at 1381 University Ave. in Healdsburg is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (ages 5-plus) Appointment needed. (707) 433-5494
- Fox Home Health's clinic is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1400 N. Dutton Ave., Suite 17, Santa Rosa.
- Rohnert Park Health Center operates a clinic at 5900 State Farm Dr. Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 1:45 (ages 12-plus) and 3 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. (ages 5-plus). Appointment needed for first, second or booster doses, call (707) 559-7500.
- Petaluma Health Center's clinic at 1179 N. McDowell Blvd. is open Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. and 1:30 to 4:45 p.m. Ages 12-plus. Appointment needed for first, second or booster doses, call (707) 559-7500.
- Sonoma Valley: Sonoma Valley Health Partners holds clinics at different sites, including at schools. Go to svhpnvaccines.org for details.

Testing updates, including local availability

As demand increases for testing, both PCR and rapid, the County Department of Health Services continues to work with our testing partners, LHI, Curative, Molecular Matrix and Fox Home Health, to make testing available in more cities across the county on more days. Appointments are suggested but walk-ins are accepted at many sites. The county's [testing page](#) includes a map to make it easier to find a convenient site. Residents can call the county hotline at 707-565-4667 (4701 in Spanish) for help making an appointment. Everyone is urged to report a positive at-home test result to the hotline.

PCR tests remain the "gold standard." Self-administered rapid antigen tests are available over the counter and online but they can be hard to find due to demand. The county is working to expand the availability of rapid tests. President Biden announced on Dec. 21 that the federal government would buy 500 million rapid tests and provide them for free to Americans starting

in January. People will be able to request them through a new website that will be set up and they will be mailed at no cost.

Use the county's [pop-up testing calendar](#) to find a site.

Fox Home Health: Walk-ins OK; 707-573-0223 x101 for an appointment.

- Roseland Community Center, 779 Sebastopol Road, Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Molecular Matrix: Make an appointment at the [Molecular Matrix website](#).

- Petaluma's Foundry Wharf, 625 Second St., Saturday, Sunday and Monday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Petaluma Valley Baptist Church, 580 Sonoma Mountain Pkwy., Thursdays and Fridays, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Andy Lopez Unity Park, 3399 Moorland Ave., Santa Rosa, Mondays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Redemption Hill Church, 2100 Petaluma Hill Road, Santa Rosa, Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

LHI: Appointments are highly recommended at <https://lhi.care/covidtesting> or call 866-284-8788. LHI offers testing from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at:

- Monte Rio Community Center, 20488 Hwy. 116, Monte Rio, Mondays
- Cotati Park and Ride, St. Joseph Way at Highways 116 and 101, Tuesdays and Wednesdays
- Petaluma Valley Baptist Church, 580 Sonoma Mountain Pkwy., Tuesdays, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Galvin Park, 3330 Yulupa Ave., Santa Rosa, Thursdays.
- Salvation Army, 721 S. McDowell Blvd., Petaluma, Friday
- A Place to Play Park, 2375 W. 3rd St., Santa Rosa, Friday
- Alliance Medical Center, 1381 University Ave., Healdsburg, Saturdays.
- Knox Presbyterian Church, 1650 W. 3rd St., Santa Rosa, Saturdays.
- West County High School, 6950 Analy Ave., Sebastopol, Sundays

Curative: Appointments are preferred, walk-ins are welcome; call 888-702-9042. Testing is available at these locations:

- Coddington (Target lot), 1000 Coddington Center, Santa Rosa, daily, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. cur.tv/coddington
- Fiesta Plaza, 200 Siesta Way, Sonoma, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. cur.tv/fiestaplaza
- Windsor Bluebird Center, 25 Bluebird Dr., Sunday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. cur.tv/windsor

- Rohnert Park Community Center, 5401 Snyder Lane, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. cur.tv/rohnertpark
- New Life Christian Fellowship, 1315 Rand St., Petaluma, Tuesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- West County Community Health Center, 652 Petaluma Ave., Sebastopol, Monday, Tuesday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. cur.tv/sebastopol
- Healdsburg Community Center, 1557 Healdsburg Ave., Mondays, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. cur.tv/healdsburg
- Cloverdale High School, 509 N. Cloverdale Blvd., Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. cur.tv/cloverdale
- West County Community Services, 15010 Armstrong Woods Road, Guerneville, Wednesdays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. cur.tv/west
- Resurrection Parish, 303 Stonypoint Road, Santa Rosa, Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. cur.tv/resurrection
- Geyserville Elementary School, 21485 Geyserville Ave., Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. cur.tv/geyserville
- Sonoma Park and Ride, Highway 12 and Thompson Avenue, Boyes Hot Springs, Sundays, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. cur.tv/boyes

On-site COVID-19 testing is available for businesses, health centers, congregate facilities, faith-based or community-based organizations or schools that would like to offer testing. They can partner with California's COVID-19 Testing Task Force to set up testing. To find out more, visit the task force's [Get Started](#) page. For local help with your organization's testing questions, email questions or requests to COVIDTest@sonoma-county.org.

The California Department of Public Health has created a [fact sheet](#) to help Californians understand when they should get tested for COVID-19.

Guidance for gatherings, travel

People who are not vaccinated should avoid travel and gatherings, according to [guidance from the California Department of Public Health](#). Residents planning to travel should make sure they have documents required by some destinations, airlines and events to prove their vaccination or testing status. Some destinations and events require a COVID-19 test or proof of vaccination. Research the requirements of your airline, destination or event to ensure you are prepared. Don't wait until the last minute to schedule an appointment. The latest [CDC guidelines for travel can be viewed here](#).

You can obtain a digital copy of your California vaccine record from [my vaccine record.cdph.ca.gov](http://my.vaccine.record.cdph.ca.gov). If there are problems with the digital vaccine

record, they can take two to three weeks to fix. Keep your paper CDC card in a secure place; make copies and save pictures on your phone.

Trust texts from 23393

California has produced a [video informing residents](#) that if they receive a text from the number 23393, it's an important message from California's COVID-19 response team and their local health department. Calconnect, the contact tracing database, uses a virtual assistant to reach out to COVID cases and contacts by text prior to them being called by a contact tracer/case investigator. The video [is also available in Spanish](#).

Update on cases in local schools

The county, in collaboration with the Sonoma County Office of Education, is implementing measures to keep our schools as safe as possible. There have been 1,284 COVID-19 cases in schools in the county since classes started in August. Of these cases, 1,138 are students and 146 are staff members. The county is posting [school cases and other related data online](#).

- Under California's [guidance](#), students are required to wear a mask indoors, along with adults while sharing indoor spaces with students. Universal masking means that classrooms and schools will not be closed for a few cases.
- California updated its [K-12 Schools Guidance](#) and [Schools Guidance Q&A](#) with modifications to quarantine protocols and new information on school-based extracurricular activities.

Volunteers needed to help with pediatric vaccination campaign

Sonoma County is seeking volunteers to assist with our pediatric vaccination mission. We are particularly looking for people with Spanish interpretation abilities to assist parents and families at school clinics as well as health care providers who can help clinically with vaccine administration and answer vaccine questions. School-based clinics are planned through February.

- Volunteers should be friendly, compassionate, and able to assist with greeting, registration and general vaccine help at vaccination clinics.
- Most shifts are three to four hours in the afternoon.
- Multicultural and multilingual community members are preferred.
- See our [vaccination clinic calendar](#) for event dates and locations and [sign up through our partner](#).

FDA approves first COVID pill that is effective against severe illness

The Food and Drug Administration on Dec. 22 [authorized](#) the first pill for COVID-19, offering a highly effective defense against severe illness. The drug, developed by Pfizer and known as Paxlovid, is authorized for COVID patients age 12 and over who are vulnerable to becoming severely ill because they are older or have medical conditions such as obesity or diabetes.

- Pfizer's laboratory studies indicate that its pills are likely to work against the Omicron variant.
- The treatment is meant to be taken as 30 pills over five days.
- A clinical trial indicated that Paxlovid was highly effective when taken soon after an infection. Pfizer's drug reduced the risk of hospitalization or death by 88 percent when given to high-risk unvaccinated volunteers within five days of the start of their symptoms.
- The government has ordered enough of Pfizer's pills to cover 10 million people, at a cost of \$530 per patient; supply will be limited at first.
- The U.S. [doubled its order](#) for Pfizer's pills on Tuesday, a move that will increase the nation's very limited supplies of the treatment in the short term. The new order will eventually provide enough pills for 10 million Americans, bringing the government's total order of the drug to 20 million treatment courses. Only 35,000 of the additional courses would be delivered this month, and 50,000 more in February, to add to the 350,000 treatment courses that were already expected in the next two months, according to a senior administration official.
- Paxlovid appears to be substantially more effective than a similar antiviral pill from Merck (see below), known as molnupiravir, that was approved Thursday by the FDA. In a clinical trial, Merck's drug reduced risk of hospitalization and death for high-risk patients by 30 percent.

FDA authorizes Merck pill for high-risk patients

The Food and Drug Administration on Thursday [authorized](#) a second antiviral pill for COVID but said it should not be preferred over other treatments. The FDA cleared the pill, developed by Merck and known as molnupiravir, for adults who are vulnerable to becoming severely ill from COVID and for whom alternative treatment options are "not accessible or clinically appropriate." The agency's decision reflects concerns that Merck's pill is only modestly effective and carries possible safety risks, including for [pregnant women](#). Merck's treatment is expected to be available early next month.

- Older people and those who have conditions like obesity, diabetes or heart disease would be eligible to get a prescription for Merck's pills if they become sick from the coronavirus and cannot get treatments like Pfizer's newly authorized pills or monoclonal antibody drugs. Both vaccinated and unvaccinated people will be eligible.

- While the FDA authorized Pfizer's treatment for high-risk COVID patients as young as 12, it said that it was authorizing Merck's drug only for adults because it "may affect bone and cartilage growth."
- Merck's treatment is meant to be taken as 40 pills over five days.

Vaccinations not linked to pre-term births, study finds

Women who received COVID vaccinations while pregnant were at no greater risk of delivering their babies prematurely or of giving birth to unusually small babies than pregnant women who did not get vaccinated, a new study reports. The study was one of the first to examine the health of babies born to women vaccinated during pregnancy. Low-birth-weight babies and infants born early are more likely to experience developmental delays and other health problems. An earlier study had found that women vaccinated during pregnancy did not face a higher risk of miscarriage than the unvaccinated.

- The new study [looked at some 46,079 singleton pregnancies](#) that resulted in a live birth, including 10,064 among women who received one or more doses of vaccine between Dec. 15, 2020, and July 22, 2021, during their pregnancies. Most had received the vaccines made by Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna, and the vast majority were inoculated during their second or third trimester.
- Overall, 6.6 percent of the babies were born prematurely, before 37 weeks of pregnancy, and 8.2 percent were born small for their gestational age, weighing less than 5 pounds and 8 ounces. Researchers found no difference in the rates among mothers who had been vaccinated while pregnant and those who had not.
- The study was conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in collaboration with Dr. Heather Lipkind, a maternal fetal medicine specialist at Yale University, HealthPartners Institute, Kaiser Permanente researchers and the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Institute.

2 of 3 antibody treatments not effective against Omicron

Two of the three monoclonal antibody treatments that doctors have depended on to keep COVID patients from becoming seriously ill do not appear to thwart the latest version of the virus. On Dec. 23, the federal government paused distribution of the treatments from Regeneron and Eli Lilly, saying it was unlikely they would work against Omicron. Those treatments represented nearly all of the country's supply. The only antibody treatment that remains potent against the new variant, from GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Biotechnology, is in very limited supply for now. Monoclonal antibodies have become a mainstay of COVID treatment, shown to be highly effective in keeping high-risk patients from being hospitalized.

CDC recommends Pfizer, Moderna vaccines over J&J's

There are three COVID vaccines available. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has full FDA approval for persons ages 16 and older, and emergency Use Authorization for use in persons 5 to 15 years of age. The Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines have been approved by the FDA for emergency use; however, the CDC recommends the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines as preferred options to the Johnson & Johnson vaccine when possible.

- The CDC's expert advisers cited increasing evidence that Johnson & Johnson's shots can trigger a rare blood clot disorder now linked to dozens of cases and at least nine deaths in the United States in the last year. The risk was greatest among women 30 to 49, estimated at 1 in 100,000 who had received the company's shot.
- The J&J vaccine is not being removed from the market. It will remain an option for people who are "unable or unwilling" to receive the more popular shots from Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech, the CDC said.
- 16 million people in the United States have received the J&J vaccine as their primary immunization, compared to 73 million fully immunized with Moderna's and 116 million with the Pfizer shots.
- The Food and Drug Administration on Aug. 23 granted full approval to Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine for people 16 and older, making it the first vaccine to move beyond emergency use status in the United States.

Complaints received for health order on face coverings

Permit Sonoma's Code Enforcement unit has received 333 complaints about public health violations across Sonoma County and its cities regarding the public health order requiring face coverings in workplaces and public settings since it was reinstated in August. No citations have been issued for violations that the county is aware of. A breakdown as of Monday (Jan. 3):

- 74.2 percent of the complaints (231) have been for businesses, not including gyms/fitness centers.
- 21.3 percent of those complaints (65) have been for gyms/fitness centers.
- 94 percent of complaints were about employees and/or customers not wearing masks.
- 3 percent were about potential COVID-19 cases or exposures.

Code Enforcement receives all complaints made by the public through the Safe707 phone line and email, as well as COVID complaints made via SoCo Report-It. Complaints outside of Code Enforcement's jurisdiction are referred to the appropriate partner agency. All complaints within Code Enforcement's

jurisdiction are investigated by a Code Enforcement inspector, who visits the property and provides information on the current public health order. People are welcome to file non-emergency complaints.

- Call: (833) SAFE707 (1-833-723-3707)
- Email: safe707@sonoma-county.org
- Online: [SoCo Report It](#)

The county has jurisdiction over complaints in unincorporated areas. A jurisdictional breakdown of the complaints:

- Sonoma County -- 54 complaints
 - 44 complaints were referred to Code Enforcement
 - 7 complaints were referred to County Health
 - 3 complaints were referred to County Environmental Health
- 100 complaints referred to Santa Rosa
- 63 complaints referred to Petaluma
- 36 complaints referred to Rohnert Park
- 24 complaints referred to Cotati
- 20 complaints referred to the city of Sonoma
- 12 complaints referred to Sebastopol
- 11 complaints referred to Windsor
- 10 complaints referred to Healdsburg
- 3 complaints referred to Cloverdale

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Sonoma County's [Emergency Rental Assistance Program](#) offers financial support to tenants and landlords. Apply on [SoCoEmergency.org/ERAP](https://www.socounty.org/ERAP), call 2-1-1 for an operator to assist in English and Spanish or visit the online [page](#) for a list of organizations that can assist in applying. Other key information:

- The program provides payment assistance for tenants who are behind on rent and utilities. It also provides options for landlords to participate and receive financial assistance.
- This program is open to all residents, regardless of immigration status.
- The expanded program removed the limit of one application per household, removing restrictions on applications from roommates.
- Individuals also can apply for 100 percent of utility bills to be paid.
- Tenants may apply for a total of 18 months worth of rental support.

Resources and useful links for residents and business owners

- Free COVID-19 testing is available for tribal communities at Sonoma County Indian Health Project. Call 707-521-4500 for details.

- Listos California offers disaster preparedness information in indigenous languages at its Farmworkers Initiative webpage.
- Information for businesses is available at SoCoLaunch.org.