



Sonoma County
Key Messages: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
December 15, 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, 818,634 doses have been administered to Sonoma County residents.

Residents fully vaccinated: 348,698 - equal to 74.1 percent of the county's eligible population.

Residents partially vaccinated: 37,785 - equal to 8 percent of the county's eligible population

All California residents 5 and older are now eligible for vaccination against COVID-19. Children ages 5 to 17 can only receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. More than 37,000 children ages 5 to 11 in the county are eligible to receive the vaccine. To date, 23.4 percent of the newly eligible children in the county already have received their first dose -- 8,700 of our children. Clinics at schools are reporting strong demand, which has contributed to a very encouraging start to the county's pediatric vaccine campaign.

The county's top priority is to build on this momentum and get more of our newly eligible children vaccinated and protected. We also remain focused on getting first and second doses administered to get more people fully vaccinated and protected, even with all adults now eligible for booster shots. More than 386,000 residents have received at least one dose -- 78.2 percent of the county's total population. There are 470,488 vaccine eligible residents in the county. That means 82.1 percent of our eligible 5 and older population is now fully or partially vaccinated. By comparison, 67.7 percent of the eligible California population is fully vaccinated with 8.6 percent partially vaccinated for a total of 76.3 percent. Nationally, 74.5 percent of the eligible population is fully or partially vaccinated.

The County's [vaccine clinics page](#) is continually updated. The [pop-up calendar](#) makes it easy to see what clinics are operating each day. The county's [testing page](#) makes it easy to find a site, book an appointment and see which sites are accepting walk-ins. The county continues to work with

our testing partners to increase the number of testing sites. Testing is widely available and PCR results often are available in 24 hours or less.

Current Sonoma County metrics:

- Our rate of new daily cases per 100,000 population is 7.7.
- Our case rate for unvaccinated individuals is 16.5 per 100,000 compared with 5.2 for vaccinated residents.
- Our overall testing positivity rate is 2.1 percent.
- Our equity metric testing positivity rate is 2.3 percent.

Update on Omicron variant, new cases, hospitalizations and deaths

This week's COVID-19 community briefings will focus on Omicron variant developments. The English briefing will be streamed live on Facebook at 4 p.m today (Dec. 1) and be repeated in Spanish at 4 p.m. on Thursday. Questions will be taken from the public. See the county's Facebook page for more information. The briefings will be recorded and quickly made available for viewing on the county's YouTube channel in English and Spanish. It is important to note that everything regarding the new variant is based on the theoretical at this time. Very little is known about transmissibility, clinical presentation and disease severity, risk of infection and vaccine effectiveness. It likely will take at least another week before experts know more about the new variant. The California Department of Public Health has issued a new fact sheet about the Omicron variant that addresses what we currently know about the variant, what California is doing in response, how Californians can protect themselves, and more.

Other key Omicron-related information:

- The World Health Organization on Friday designated Omicron as "a variant of concern." On Monday, the WHO said the global risk posed by the variant is "very high."
- The first case of the Omicron variant has been reported in the United States, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced today. The patient, a traveler who returned to California from South Africa on Nov. 22, is in isolation and aggressive contact tracing is underway. The individual was fully vaccinated and had mild symptoms that are improving. All close contacts have tested negative so far, the CDC said. Officials did not say where the infected individual lives, but the case was confirmed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health, with genomic sequencing conducted at UC San Francisco.

- President Biden has restricted travel from South Africa, whose scientists first detected the variant, and seven other nations, a move designed to buy the United States time in determining how to respond to Omicron. On Monday, he said the variant is “a cause for concern, not a cause “for panic.”
- Cases have been identified in 20 other countries across four continents to date, including Britain, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands.
- Federal health officials have directed airlines to provide the CDC with the names and contact information of all passengers who boarded flights bound for the United States since Nov. 29 and who had been in southern Africa during the prior two weeks. The directive, issued today, applies to passengers who spent time in Botswana, the Kingdoms of Eswatini and Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa in the two weeks before flying to the United States.
- The CDC also said today it plans to toughen testing and screening requirements for international fliers headed to the United States.
- Top federal health officials said Tuesday that they were expanding a surveillance program at some of the largest U.S. airports as part of a sprawling effort to identify and contain what could be the first cases of the Omicron variant in the United States. Four international airports — in San Francisco, New York, Newark and Atlanta — would enhance screening in a search for possible Omicron cases.
- Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government’s top infectious disease expert, reiterated at the news conference Tuesday with CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky that it was still too early to truly understand how dangerous the variant might be. It would likely be weeks before scientists studying the new virus were able to determine more about its properties, Dr. Fauci cautioned again on Tuesday. Dr. Fauci and Dr. Walensky continued to urge people to get their boosters, which they said would provide more protection in the face of the new variant.
- Much remains unknown about Omicron, including whether it is more transmissible and capable of causing more serious illness.
- For context, although Delta turned out to be much more transmissible than prior variants — and there is some data suggesting it can cause more severe illness in the unvaccinated — there is little evidence it is more lethal or capable of outsmarting vaccines.
- Omicron has about 50 mutations, including more than 30 in its all-important spike protein — a structure on the virus’s surface that allows it to enter the body, and that is also the part that vaccines train the immune system to recognize and attack. Having so many mutations on the spike raises concerns that Omicron might be able to invade cells or evade antibodies more effectively.
- Vaccine makers have expressed confidence they can tweak existing formulations to make the shots more effective against new variants.

Public health officials say an increase in cases is to be expected as this is a winter virus, regardless of the variant. This is the time of the year when we spend more time indoors, where this virus spreads especially fast. People will be gathering with family and friends over the holidays. That typically means a bump in cases a few weeks after a holiday, which is why county health leaders are worried that we will see another surge. COVID-related hospitalizations have increased significantly in the past week, which has local officials concerned about capacity this winter. Health officials say it is vital to use our familiar mitigation measures, including masks, to avoid a surge in cases and hospitalizations. This remains a pandemic of the unvaccinated, with the unvaccinated accounting for most hospitalizations and nearly all deaths. Health officials warn that the unvaccinated are putting themselves and others at risk by choosing not to get vaccinated. Dr. Sundari Mase, the county health officer, also urges everyone to get a flu shot.

- As of Tuesday, 22 COVID patients were in Sonoma County hospitals, up from 16 last week. This included six COVID patients in ICU beds, compared to two patients in the ICU for several days last week.
- Just one COVID-related death has been reported for November after 11 in October, 25 in September, 38 in August and 17 in July. The county reported one COVID death in May and four in June. Deaths typically lag hospitalizations by a month or more.
- Nearly all of the 412 reported COVID-19 deaths that have occurred in Sonoma County have been unvaccinated residents.
- Vaccines remain powerfully effective against severe illness and death.
- 71.6 percent of residents ages 16 to 24 are fully vaccinated and 72.5 percent of residents ages 25 to 34. For comparison, 62.6 percent of children ages 12 to 15 are now fully vaccinated, even though they have only been eligible since the middle of May, and 69.1 percent have received at least one dose. The vaccination rate for ages 12 to 17 has slowed recently and county health officials are working to encourage teens who are not vaccinated to get their first dose. Ninety-three percent of county residents 70 and older are fully vaccinated.
- There have been 4,673 cases of COVID-19 of residents who are fully vaccinated in Sonoma County since vaccinations started. This represents 1.34 percent of fully vaccinated residents.
- The United States has recorded 780,000 COVID-19 deaths. The U.S. is averaging 83,000 new cases a day and about 900 daily deaths.
- Trust texts from 23393: California has produced a new 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.
- The U.S. Surgeon General has developed a Community Toolkit for Addressing Health Misinformation. It provides guidance and resources

for health care providers, educators, librarians, faith leaders, and trusted community members to understand, identify, and stop the spread of health misinformation in their communities. A Spanish version is coming soon.

Guidance for holiday gatherings, travel

People who are not vaccinated should avoid travel and holiday gatherings, Sonoma County Health Officer Dr. Sundari Mase said, citing 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. Other recommendations to stay safe over the holidays include:

- Get a booster if you are 18 or older and it has been at least six months since you completed your Pfizer/Moderna vaccine series or at least two months since you received a Janssen vaccine.
- Keep indoor gatherings small.
- If everyone at an indoor gathering is fully vaccinated, masks are optional.
- If your guests are unvaccinated or you don't know their status, plan gatherings that are small, short and outdoors.
- Wear a mask when you might be around unvaccinated people, especially indoors.
- Wear a mask when around older individuals or people with medical conditions.
- When gathering inside, ventilate well. Open doors and windows, run HVAC systems, and make sure high-quality air filters are installed.
- Get tested if you have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Stay home if you are sick.

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. Before scheduling your test, check with your test provider to see if they meet the required result certification and timelines for your travel, destination or event. Don't wait until the last minute to schedule an appointment. Arriving at a gate without acceptable test results can cost you time and may result in you missing your flight or event. [CDC guidelines for travel can be viewed here.](#)

You can obtain a digital copy of your California vaccine record from myvaccinerecord.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. If you have

lost your card and your digital record gives you an error, ask your primary care provider to provide you with a copy of your immunization record.

Update on Sonoma County's pediatric vaccine campaign

The county's pediatric vaccine campaign is off to an encouraging start as 23.4 percent of the eligible children ages 5 to 11 have received at least one dose since vaccines became available in early November. 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://www.myturn.ca.gov).

More than 40 vaccination clinics will be held at designated schools throughout the county to serve people who do not have convenient or affordable access to healthcare providers. [A list of clinics at schools](#) is on the Sonoma County Office of Education website along with information for parents. Doses for those 12 and older also will be available at those clinics.

Sonoma County public health leaders, doctors, health care 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 as possible.

County health and education leaders are working to answer parents' questions about the pediatric vaccine and address their concerns. Webinars in English and Spanish were held by county Health Services and the Sonoma County Office of Education to give parents an opportunity to ask questions and hear from other parents. Both webinars are available for viewing on the [county's YouTube channel](#) in English and Spanish.

- The county's pediatric vaccine campaign is being planned with a focus on equity. The sites for school-based clinics are in areas with recent 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. Our health equity team is seeking additional input on sites.
- 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 County Office of Education’s goal was to vaccinate a quarter of the 37,000 children aged 5 to 11 by Dec. 1. The campaign seeks to vaccinate half by Jan. 31, and 70 percent by Feb. 28.
- The FDA authorized the Pfizer vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds in May; 69 percent of that age group in Sonoma County has now received at least one dose of the vaccine.
- While severe illness due to COVID-19 is rare among children, they can become very sick.
- As of Nov. 25, nearly 6.9 million children have tested positive for COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic. This week nearly 132,000 child cases were added. For the 16th week in a row, child COVID-19 cases are above 100,000. Since the first week of September, there have been 1.85 million additional cases in 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.
- A vaccine testimonial by local parents of a child who received the pediatric vaccine is now available on the county’s YouTube channel.
- California has produced five new videos with facts on COVID-19 vaccine safety, including the pediatric vaccine.

Update on expanded guidance for booster shots in Sonoma County

Prompted by concerns about the Omicron variant, the CDC on Monday said that all American adults “should” get booster doses of the available coronavirus vaccines. The CDC had previously said that Americans over age 50, as well as those ages 18 and older living in long-term care facilities, “should” get booster shots while all other adults “may” decide to do so based on their individual risk.

Sonoma County has opened up COVID-19 boosters to all adults 18 years and older, provided they qualify based on the timing of their last dose of the vaccine. The expansion aligns the county with California Department of Public Health guidance. 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. And 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 to schedule a booster shot. Vaccine supplies may be limited at the county’s fixed and pop-up clinics.
- 88,602 boosters have been administered in Sonoma County since they were authorized for higher-risk groups in September.
- 48,285 boosters have gone to seniors ages 65 and older, or 57.9 percent of that age group.

- 40,317 booster doses have been administered to residents under age 65.
- The CDC reports that 41.1 million fully vaccinated people have received an additional vaccine dose in the United States.
- The FDA approved the “mix-and-match” strategy and booster shots of the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines on Oct. 20.
- The Moderna booster is half the size of the dose administered for a primary series.
- Pfizer on Tuesday asked federal regulators to authorize a booster shot of their vaccine for 16- and 17-year-olds. If approved, the shot would be the first booster available to people under 18. Several million teenagers could quickly become eligible for an additional shot.

Vaccine for children ages 5 to 11 authorized by federal regulators

The CDC on Nov. 2 endorsed the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. The children will receive one-third of the dose authorized for those 12 and older, delivered by smaller needles and stored in smaller vials to avoid confusion with adult doses.

- The Pfizer vaccine is the only vaccine to receive emergency use authorization so far for those ages 5 to 11.
- A second dose will be necessary, three weeks after the first.
- About 28 million U.S. children are eligible for the vaccine, including 37,185 in Sonoma County.
- Tens of thousands of children have been hospitalized with COVID, and 730 have died, according to data collected by the CDC.
- Some children who are infected may go on to develop long COVID, remaining ill for months, or multisystem inflammatory syndrome, which has affected at least 5,500 children in the United States.
- 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.

Moderna will delay asking for authorization of a half-dose of its vaccine for children aged 6 to 11. The company decided to pull back after regulators informed the company that they may not complete their review this year of Moderna’s earlier request to offer a full dose of its vaccine to adolescents 12 to 17. Regulators cited concerns about the risks of myocarditis, a rare condition involving inflammation of the heart muscle. Heart inflammation is an exceedingly rare risk of both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, and is more commonly seen in young men or boys. Most cases are mild and resolve quickly. Health officials have stressed that COVID itself can cause heart inflammation at higher rates than the rare cases caused by the vaccine.

Vaccination delivery strategy

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. Outreach is crucial as we work to address vaccine hesitancy and other issues that have kept some from getting vaccinated. 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 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (ages 5-plus)
- The Rohnert Park Community Center clinic at 5401 Snyder Lane is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for ages 12-plus; 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. for ages 5-11 only. 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. Appointment needed. (ages 5-plus)
- Fox Home Health also operates a clinic Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 1400 N. Dutton Ave., Suite 17, Santa Rosa.
- Rohnert Park Health Center operates a clinic at 5900 State Farm Dr. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 1:45 (ages 12-plus) and 3 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. (ages 5-plus); on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. (ages 12-plus) and 1:30 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. (ages 5-plus). No appointment needed for first, second or booster doses, though you can make one at (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. No appointment needed for first, second or booster doses, though you can make one at (707) 559-7500.
- Sonoma Valley: Sonoma Valley Health Partners is holding clinics at multiple sites, including at schools. Go to svhpvaccines.org for details.

Testing updates, including local availability

Testing is widely available throughout the county. Residents are encouraged to make use of testing before family and other gatherings over the holidays. PCR test results often are available in 24 hours. 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. Changes to the county's [testing page](#), which include a map, make it easier to find a convenient site. Residents can call the hotline at 707-565-4667 (4701 in Spanish) for help making an appointment.

PCR tests remain the "gold standard." If the PCR test is positive, county health staff can help residents navigate the next steps. People should not consider themselves "safe" if they are asymptomatic and receive a negative result from a rapid antigen test and should also get a PCR test. Self-administered rapid tests are available through non-partner providers and at pharmacies.

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.

- 1400 North Dutton Ave., Suite 17; Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Testing added to the vaccine clinic at the site. Visit [FoxHome](#)
- Roseland Community Center, 779 Sebastopol Road, Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

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

- Petaluma's Foundry Wharf, 625 Second St., Petaluma, 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 7p.m. at:

- 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, Fridays
- A Place to Play Park, 2375 W. 3rd St., Santa Rosa, Fridays
- 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 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at these locations unless noted:

- Coddington (Target lot), 1000 Coddington Center, Santa Rosa, every day. cur.tv/coddington
- Fiesta Plaza, 200 Siesta Way, Sonoma, Monday through Friday, 7 am. To 2 p.m. cur.tv/fiestaplaza
- Windsor Bluebird Center, 25 Bluebird Dr., Sunday through Thursday. cur.tv/windsor
- Rohnert Park Community Center, 5401 Snyder Lane, Monday through Friday. cur.tv/rohnertpark
- New Life Christian Fellowship, 1315 Rand St., Petaluma, Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- West County Community Health Center, 652 Petaluma Ave., Sebastopol, Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. cur.tv/sebastopol
- Healdsburg Community Center, 1557 Healdsburg Ave., Mondays. cur.tv/healdsburg
- Petaluma Health Center, 1179 N. McDowell Blvd., Mondays. cur.tv/petaluma
- Cloverdale High School, 509 N. Cloverdale Blvd., Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. cur.tv/cloverdale
- West County Community Services, 15010 Armstrong Woods Road, Guerneville, Wednesdays, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. cur.tv/west
- Resurrection Parish, 303 Stonypoint Road, Santa Rosa, Thursdays. cur.tv/resurrection
- Geyserville Elementary School, 21485 Geyserville Ave., Thursdays. cur.tv/geyserville
- Sonoma Park and Ride, Highway 12 and Thompson Avenue, Boyes Hot Springs, Sundays. 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.

- Get tested immediately for COVID-19 if you are feeling any symptoms – regardless of vaccination status. COVID-19 symptoms can feel like a common cold (including just “the sniffles”), seasonal allergies, or flu.
- If you’ve been exposed to COVID-19 and are not fully vaccinated, get tested right away. If you test negative, retest five to seven days after your exposure date.
- If you were fully vaccinated, you should get tested three to five days after close contact with someone who tested positive.
- If you have recovered from COVID in the last three months and have had no new symptoms since your recent exposure, you do not need to get tested.

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 1,037 COVID-19 cases in schools in the county since classes started in August. Of these cases, 915 are students and 122 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.
- The California health department has a new resource -- navigating the COVID-19 exposure decision tree for K-12 schools. The [fact sheet](#) (in English and [Spanish](#)) helps individuals know when they should access COVID-19 testing, and when they should isolate and quarantine following symptoms and/or possible exposure at school
- California has 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 urgently seeking volunteers to assist with our pediatric vaccination mission. We are looking for people with Spanish interpretation abilities to assist parents and families at our upcoming school clinics as well as health care providers who can help clinically with vaccine administration and answer vaccine questions. Volunteers should be friendly,

compassionate, and able to assist with greeting, registration and general vaccine help at vaccination clinics.

There are multiple dates, times and locations throughout the months of December and January that volunteers are needed. Most shifts are three to four hours, in the afternoon, with a few Saturdays. We ask volunteers to meet a half hour prior to scheduled event time for a team meeting.

Multicultural and multilingual community members are preferred.

This is an easy way to support our community and help protect our children. See our [vaccination clinic calendar](#) for event dates and locations and [sign up through our partner](#).

County updates guidance for trips for school and youth sports

The county on Nov. 1 [updated its guidance](#) regarding travel for school and youth sports. On Aug. 24, Sonoma County Public Health issued a recommendation strongly discouraging overnight field trips in all school settings due to “the high incidence of COVID-19 currently being experienced in our county and the increase in transmissibility of the Delta variant.” Current evidence supports that fully vaccinated individuals can safely participate in many activities that they did before the pandemic, including that fully vaccinated individuals are less likely to get and spread COVID-19 and [can now travel at low risk](#) to themselves within the United States. School officials and youth sports organizations planning overnight group trips and excursions for fully vaccinated adults and students should still consider implementing the following strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 infection in youth sports and overnight trips. School officials and youth sports organizations should verify that all participants, including students, athletes, teachers, coaches, chaperones, and volunteers, are fully vaccinated. Students, staff, and volunteers must wear masks indoors and in shared vehicles while on field trips and travel to sporting events and competitions with the following exceptions:

- The organizer (teacher, coach) has verified that all individuals present are fully vaccinated.
- There are no more than 100 individuals present, and the group present gathers on a regular basis (e.g., classroom, sports team).
- The host or organizer can control access to the setting, and the setting is not open to the public or others not in the class or team cohort.

For additional requirements see the county’s Oct. 21 [amended health order](#).

Bay Area health officers issue criteria for lifting mask mandate

Sonoma County on Oct. 14 joined most other Bay Area counties in [establishing criteria](#) that must be met before the indoor masking

requirements are lifted. It could be early January before those benchmarks are met in Sonoma County. The benchmarks require:

- That the county reach the moderate COVID-19 transmission tier, as defined by the CDC, and stay there for at least three weeks. That would be fewer than 50 cases each week per 100,000 population. The county is averaging about 60 new cases per week per 100,000 population.
- That COVID-19 hospitalizations are low and stable, in the judgment of the county health officer.
- That 80 percent of the county's total population be fully vaccinated or eight weeks have passed since a COVID-19 vaccine has been authorized for emergency use for 5- to 11-year-olds. The eight-week benchmark will be triggered at the end of the year.

Sonoma County allows some groups to go maskless indoors

Sonoma County Health Officer Dr. Sundari Mase on Oct. 21 amended a health order to allow certain stable groups of people, such as those in gyms, classes and offices, the option of lifting the mandate on wearing masks indoors if they verify that all members of the group are fully vaccinated for COVID-19. The move adds an additional exception to the order requiring face coverings in all indoor public settings, which Dr. Mase issued Aug. 3 to help control the surging Delta variant. The exception is voluntary, so employers, hosts, and organizers may continue to enforce universal indoor masking, regardless of vaccination status. Highlights of the order:

- The amendment applies to indoor gatherings of 100 or fewer people including in offices, gyms, fitness centers, employee commuter vehicles, religious gatherings, college classes, and other organized gatherings of individuals who meet regularly.
- Employers, hosts, and organizers must control access to the setting, and the setting cannot be open to the general public.
- FAQs provide more information

California to mandate vaccines for children 12 and older for school

California will enact the nation's first coronavirus vaccine mandate for school children, Gov. Gavin Newsom said on Oct. 1. The goal is to have all students in seventh through 12th grades vaccinated by next fall once the shots gain final federal approval for everyone 12 and over. The Pfizer vaccine is being administered under an emergency authorization for those ages 12 to 15. The state will require students in kindergarten through sixth grades to get the vaccine once final federal approval comes for ages 5 to 11. County officials

expect that means the mandate will not impact this school year. California has mandated since 1995 that school-aged children be vaccinated against 10 vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles, mumps and polio.

County expands health order on flu shots

County Health Officer Dr. Sundari Mase has expanded the scope of an Oct. 1 health order requiring workers at certain health care and congregate facilities to get vaccinated against influenza. The widened flu vaccine requirement now applies to:

- All workers in adult and senior care facilities licensed by the state Department of Social Services
- In-home care workers, including home health aides
- Hospice workers
- Workers at Regional Centers serving people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Workers must be in compliance by Nov. 30. Flu season, which began Nov. 1 and lasts to May 1, arrives this year as Sonoma County continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. The CDC recommends that everyone over the age of 6 months get a flu vaccine every year.

Dr. Mase on Oct. 1 issued a health order requiring workers at certain health care and congregate facilities to get vaccinated against influenza. She issued a strong recommendation that the public, including first responders, get an influenza vaccine this flu season.

- The flu vaccine requirement applies to all workers who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or residents.
- Workers include nurses, physicians, technicians, therapists and pharmacists at such facilities as acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, psychiatric hospitals, dialysis centers and dental offices.
- Workers must be in compliance by Nov. 30.

Self-quarantine instructions if you've been exposed to COVID-19

California has produced an updated fact sheet summarizing self-quarantine instructions for individuals exposed to COVID-19. The fact sheet explains the importance of self-quarantine if you've been exposed, recommendations for those who are fully vaccinated, how to self-quarantine, and when to get tested. The fact sheets are available in numerous languages on the state's COVID-19 Guidance in More Languages page.

Vaccination orders and guidance

All of Sonoma County's health orders and guidance can be found at socoemergency.org/emergency/novel-coronavirus/health-orders/

- The county on Sept. 24 issued a public health recommendation for safely holding public meetings. Virtual online meetings are strongly recommended as they present the lowest risk of transmission of COVID. At in-person public meetings, masks are still required.
- Sonoma County on Sept. 3 issued a health order that requires home health workers and pharmacists in the county to show proof of vaccination or undergo regular testing. The health order applies to all businesses and governmental entities. The order took effect Sept. 24.
- Sonoma County on Aug. 4 issued a health order calling for all fire, law enforcement and emergency medical service workers and staff at disaster shelters to show proof of vaccination or undergo weekly testing. This mandate took effect on Sept. 1.
- County supervisors voted Aug. 17 to extend the proof of vaccination requirement to all 4,470 county workers.
- Santa Rosa's policy requiring its 1,500 city employees to be vaccinated or undergo weekly testing went into effect Oct. 1.
- Santa Rosa Junior College on Sept. 14 mandated that all faculty, trustees and students who plan to be on campus had until Oct. 15 to verify they are vaccinated, or test weekly.
- Sonoma State University students were required to submit verification of vaccination by Sept. 30. There is no testing option.
- California requires that all state workers and workers in health care and high-risk congregate settings show proof of full vaccination or be tested. Workers in health care settings must have been vaccinated by Sept. 30. Healthcare Worker Vaccine Requirement.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Sonoma County has expanded financial support available to tenants and landlords through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. It is easier to apply now and people can get help navigating the process in English and Spanish. Applicants can apply on SoCoEmergency.org/ERAP, by calling 2-1-1 for an operator to assist in English and Spanish or by visiting 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 potential amount of state and federal funds that have been made available to the county is \$49 million.

- As of Nov. 15, the county has distributed \$18.8 million to community based organizations handling applications for assistance. Of that amount, \$16.9 million has been distributed to applicants.
- Tenants are encouraged to apply because changes to the program have made it easier to qualify, including the use of self-attestation.
- 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.
- In addition to the increase in payments for past-due and upcoming rent, individuals will be able to apply for financial assistance for moving costs, hotel stays during transitions and security deposits.

A statewide moratorium on most evictions ended Oct. 1. Sonoma County tenants who missed rent payments during the pandemic are still protected, according to county attorneys. The protection for past unpaid rent will last until the local moratorium expires, either on June 30, 2022, or 60 days after local officials declare the pandemic emergency over, whichever is earlier.

Complaints received for health order on face coverings

Permit Sonoma's Code Enforcement unit has received 248 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 early August. No citations have been issued for violations that the county is aware of. A breakdown of the complaints received as of Nov. 22:

- 78.2 percent of the complaints (194) have been for businesses, not including gyms/fitness centers.
- 18.5 percent of those complaints (46) have been for gyms/fitness centers.
- 92 percent of complaints were about employees and/or customers not wearing masks.
- 4 percent of complaints were about potential positive 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 via the Safe707 phone line and email, or via SoCo Report-It.

- 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 -- 46 complaints
 - 36 complaints were referred to Code Enforcement
 - 7 complaints were referred to County Health
 - 3 complaints were referred to County Environmental Health
- 63 complaints referred to Santa Rosa
- 38 complaints referred to Petaluma
- 30 complaints referred to Rohnert Park
- 20 complaints referred to the city of Sonoma
- 20 complaints referred to Cotati
- 11 complaints referred to Sebastopol
- 10 complaints referred to Healdsburg
- 7 complaints referred to Windsor
- 3 complaints referred to Cloverdale

FDA expected to authorize antiviral pills to treat high-risk cases

An expert committee on Tuesday recommended that the FDA authorize a COVID pill from Merck for high-risk adults, the first in a new class of antiviral drugs that could work against a wide range of variants. The drug, known as molnupiravir, has been shown to modestly reduce the risk of hospitalization and death, predominantly from the Delta, Mu and Gamma variants. The panel recommended it for COVID patients who are older or have medical conditions that make them vulnerable to severe illness. The pill could be authorized in the United States within days, and available by year's end. In the coming weeks, the F.D.A. may also greenlight a similar pill from Pfizer that appears to be significantly more effective than Merck's.

Scientists have yet to run experiments to see how well the pills block Omicron viruses from replicating. Omicron has more than 30 mutations on the spike protein that latches on to human cells. But the pills do not target the spike protein. Instead, they weaken two proteins involved in the virus's replication machinery. Omicron carries only one mutation in each of those proteins, and neither looks as if it would stop the pills from doing their jobs.

- Merck's pill was 50 percent effective when given within five days of the onset of symptoms.
- Pfizer's pill cut the risk of hospitalization or death by 89 percent when given within three days after the start of symptoms. Including people

who began treatment on the fourth or fifth day, the pill reduced the risk of hospitalization or death by 85 percent.

- The Pfizer and Merck pills are expected to reach many more people than monoclonal antibody treatments, which are more expensive and usually given by intravenous infusion at a clinic.
- The treatment consists of 30 pills given over five days.
- Pfizer's drug is in the class of so-called protease inhibitors that are commonly used to treat HIV and hepatitis C.

The government has agreed to buy 3.1 million courses of molnupiravir, the Merck drug, for \$2.2 billion, about \$700 per course of treatment. The Biden administration is planning to pay \$5 billion for 10 million courses of the Pfizer drug, about \$500 per treatment course. Doses of the drugs distributed by the federal government would go to states and patients at no cost. Supplies are expected to be very limited in the beginning. The monoclonal antibody treatments cost the government about \$1,250 per dose and can carry infusion fees that leave patients with hundreds of dollars in copays.

U.S. vaccine rule for large companies put on hold by federal court

A federal appeals court on Nov. 12 called a federal rule requiring large companies to mandate COVID-19 vaccines for employees "staggeringly overbroad" and ordered that its implementation remain blocked in a case likely bound for the Supreme Court. The Biden administration set Jan. 4 as the deadline for companies with 100 or more employees to have COVID vaccinations or require weekly testing of workers.

More than 90 percent of 3.5 million federal employees had received at least one dose by Nov. 22, the deadline set by President Biden. The vast majority of those employees are fully vaccinated.

U.S. lifts travel ban for vaccinated visitors

The United States reopened its borders on Nov. 8 for fully vaccinated travelers from dozens of countries. Under the new rules, fully vaccinated travelers will be allowed to enter the U.S. if they can show proof of vaccination and a negative coronavirus test taken within 72 hours of travel. Unvaccinated Americans and children under the age of 18 are exempt from the requirement, but must take a test within 24 hours of travel. FAQs from the State Department provide more information.

Pandemic's impact on life expectancy in Sonoma County

Life expectancy decreased 2.1 years in 2020, compared to the 2017-2019 average, for Latinx residents in Sonoma County compared to 0.7 years for

white, non-Hispanic residents. The differences in life expectancy and the disproportionate impact on the Latinx community illustrate why equity is such an important part of the County of Sonoma's vaccine strategy.

- The premature death rate from COVID-19 was almost 10 times higher for Latinx residents (409.4 per 100,000 population compared to 42.64 per 100,000 for white, non-Hispanic residents).
- COVID was responsible for 7 percent of all premature lives lost for Latinx residents compared to 1 percent for white, non-Hispanic residents.
- COVID contributed to 12 percent of total deaths for Latinx residents compared to 3 percent for white, non-Hispanic residents.

Addressing vaccine hesitancy

The CDC has provided advice about [how to address vaccine hesitancy](#). Some suggestions for how to address concerns among friends and family:

- Listen to questions with empathy.
- Acknowledge emotions so they know they have been heard.
- Ask open-ended questions to explore their concerns.
- The state's fact sheet, "Busting Myths," is in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

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](#).