



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, 863,288 doses have been administered to Sonoma County residents. The first doses were administered a year ago this week.

Residents fully vaccinated: 351,484 - equal to 74.7 percent of the county's eligible population.

Residents partially vaccinated: 40,576 - equal to 8.6 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, 29.4 percent of the newly eligible children in the county already are partially or fully vaccinated -- nearly 11,000 children. Clinics at schools are reporting strong demand, which has contributed to an encouraging start to the county's pediatric vaccine campaign. Teens ages 16 and 17 also are now eligible for a booster shot of the Pfizer vaccine.

The county's top priority is to build on this momentum and get more of our eligible children vaccinated and protected. We also remain focused on getting first and second doses administered to get more people fully vaccinated and protected, along with encouraging everyone who is eligible to get a booster shot as soon as they are eligible. More than 392,000 residents have received at least one dose -- nearly 80 percent percent of the county's total population. There are 470,488 vaccine eligible residents. That means 83.4 percent of our eligible 5 and older population is now fully or partially vaccinated. By comparison, 69.8 percent of the eligible California population is fully vaccinated with 8.1 percent partially vaccinated for a total of 77.9 percent. Nationally, 76.7 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 11.1.
- Our case rate for unvaccinated individuals is 22.5 per 100,000 compared with 6.1 for vaccinated residents.
- Our overall testing positivity rate is 2.7 percent.
- Our equity metric testing positivity rate is 2.8 percent.

Update on new cases, hospitalizations and deaths

We are seeing an increase in cases, likely because of holiday gatherings. This also is a winter virus, regardless of the variant. Recent rains mean we are spending even more time indoors. COVID-related hospitalizations, an increasingly important barometer, have been relatively stable for the past month and few COVID patients are in local intensive care units. We also have not seen a jump in deaths here.

Health officials say it is vital to use our familiar preventive measures to avoid a surge in cases and hospitalizations. We know what works. Get vaccinated and boosted. Wear a mask. Increase ventilation. Stay home if you're sick. Get tested, especially before any holiday gatherings. Local health officials strongly recommend getting a rapid test before you attend or host gatherings. This remains a pandemic of the unvaccinated, with the unvaccinated accounting for most hospitalizations and nearly all deaths. People who are unvaccinated are 15 times more likely to be hospitalized here if they get COVID. And they are 13 times more likely to die here from COVID-related illness. Health officials warn that the unvaccinated are putting themselves and others at risk by choosing not to get vaccinated. Dr. Sundari Mase, the county's health officer, also urges everyone to get a flu shot.

- As of today, 27 COVID patients were in Sonoma County hospitals. This included two in ICU beds.
- Five COVID-related deaths have 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 416 reported COVID-19 deaths that have occurred in Sonoma County have been unvaccinated residents.
- Vaccines remain powerfully effective against severe illness and death.

- 72.5 percent of residents ages 16 to 24 are fully vaccinated and 73.2 percent of residents ages 25 to 34. For comparison, 63 percent of children ages 12 to 15 are now fully vaccinated, even though they have only been eligible since the middle of May, and 70 percent have received at least one dose. Ninety-three percent of county residents 70 and older are fully vaccinated.
- The vaccination rate for ages 12 to 17 has slowed. Officials are encouraging teens who are not vaccinated to get their first dose.
- The United States has recorded 800,000 COVID-19 deaths. The U.S. is averaging about 121,000 new cases a day, a 46 percent increase over the past two weeks, and about 1,300 daily deaths, a 40 percent increase over the same period.
- The number of known U.S. cases has surpassed 50 million.
- The U.S. Surgeon General has developed a Community Toolkit for Addressing Health Misinformation.
- A state fact sheet, "Busting Myths," is available in English and Spanish.

This week's COVID-19 community briefing will include updates on rapid testing, the state's indoor mask mandate, pediatric vaccines and the Omicron variant. The webinar will be streamed live on Facebook at 4 p.m. today (Dec. 15). The briefing will be recorded in Spanish and be made available on the county's YouTube channel.

State reimposes indoor mask mandate; what it means locally

California is again requiring residents to wear masks in indoor public settings starting today, with case rates rising and amid uncertainty over the Omicron variant. The mandate, explained in a press release, will remain in place for 30 days until at least Jan. 15, 2022. The impacts on Sonoma County are fairly limited. The California Department of Public Health came out with a modification to their mask mandate making it clear that this new order only applies to counties that do not already have indoor masking mandates that apply to all irrespective of vaccine status. This includes exemptions. Here's where we stand, for now. There will be no changes to the current masking policies in Sonoma County. The amendment announced in October by Sonoma County's health officer — which allowed some gyms, churches, employers and other organizations to let stable cohorts of fully vaccinated individuals go maskless indoors — remains unchanged.

- The state will also require unvaccinated people attending so-called mega-events (more than 1,000 people) to show proof of a negative test result within a day, if it's an antigen test, and within two days for a PCR test. The previous requirement was three days.
- The state also is recommending travelers who visit or return to California to get tested within five days of their arrival.

- Other states have similar indoor mandates, including Washington, Oregon, Illinois, New Mexico, Nevada, Hawaii and New York.

Update on the Omicron variant

No cases of the Omicron variant have been reported to date in Sonoma County. County public health is sequencing all COVID-19 samples for variants. It is important to note that little is still known definitively about transmissibility, clinical presentation and disease severity and risk of infection regarding the new variant. Delta, which is highly contagious, remains the dominant variant in Sonoma County.

What we know about Omicron and other related information:

- The World Health Organization on Nov. 26 deemed Omicron a "variant of concern."
- First identified in Botswana and South Africa, this new variant has prompted concern among scientists and health officials because of an unusually high number of mutations that have the potential to make the virus more transmissible and less susceptible to existing vaccines.
- The variant has been identified in more than 80 countries. It is spreading rapidly in several countries, including Britain, Denmark and Norway, but researchers have yet to determine if it is truly more contagious than other variants.
- Cases have been reported in 35 U.S. states.
- Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO's director general, said Tuesday that "Omicron is spreading at a rate we have not seen with any previous variant." Tedros cautioned against underestimating the variant. "Even if Omicron causes less severe cases, the sheer number of cases could once again overwhelm unprepared health systems," he said.
- Booster doses of both the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are likely to offer a substantial increase in protection against the Omicron variant, Dr. Anthony Fauci said today. Dr. Fauci, President Biden's top medical adviser for the coronavirus response, shared preliminary data from his institute's analysis of the Moderna vaccine, showing that while two doses produced a negligible antibody response against Omicron in the laboratory, protection shot up after a third dose, suggesting there will be breakthrough infections in fully vaccinated people who have not had their booster shots. "Our booster vaccine regimens work against Omicron," he said. "At this point, there is no need for a very specific booster. And so the message remains clear: If you are unvaccinated get vaccinated, and particularly in the arena of Omicron if you are fully vaccinated, get your booster shot."
- In a briefing on Tuesday with state and local health officials, CDC officials warned of two possible scenarios. The first was a tidal wave of infections, both Omicron and Delta, arriving as soon as next month, just

as influenza and other winter respiratory infections peak. Federal officials also proposed a second scenario in which a smaller surge occurs in the spring. It was unclear which forecast was more likely.

- While the Delta variant remains dominant in the United States, Omicron is estimated to represent about 3 percent of circulating cases, up from 0.4 percent in the previous week, according to projections by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- In the region comprising New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, the percentage of Omicron infections had already reached 13.1 percent.
- At least 39 cases of the variant have been identified in California.
- All three U.S.-authorized COVID-19 vaccines appear to be significantly less protective against the Omicron variant in laboratory testing, but a booster dose likely restores most of the protection, according to a study released on Tuesday. The study from researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard and MIT tested blood from people who received the Moderna, Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines against a pseudovirus engineered to resemble the Omicron. The scientists also suggested that Omicron is more infectious than previous variants of concern, including about twice as transmissible as the Delta variant. The results are in line with other studies recently published.
- BioNTech and Pfizer said last week that a three-shot course of their vaccine was able to neutralize the new variant in a laboratory test, but two doses resulted in significantly lower neutralizing antibodies.
- Moderna and J&J have yet to release any of their own data about how the vaccines perform against the new variant.
- At a World Health Organization meeting today, scientists said that several laboratory studies suggest that so-called T cells in vaccinated people can put up a strong defense against the variant, which could help prevent severe disease, hospitalization and death. The variant's mutations enable it to evade many of the antibodies produced either by vaccination or infection with previous variants. Antibodies are not the only important player in our immune response to the virus.
- The true impact of the virus is not always felt immediately, with hospitalizations and deaths often lagging well behind initial outbreaks.
- Vaccine makers have expressed confidence they can tweak existing formulations to make the shots more effective against new variants.

Rapid testing urged by local health officials during holidays

Local residents are being urged by county public health and other medical professionals to make use of rapid COVID-19 tests during this time of holiday gatherings and travel. The county is working to increase the availability of rapid tests. Rapid tests are widely available at pharmacies.

They cost about \$25 for a two-test kit, which can be prohibitive for some residents. The county wants to do more to lower that barrier and encourage their use along with a more sensitive PCR test. PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests cannot be done at home and results typically take at least a day. Ideally, if you know that you will be traveling or gathering, you should take a PCR test three days before your event, and then a rapid test on the day of the event to confirm your status. And be vaccinated and boosted, of course.

Update on Sonoma County's pediatric vaccine campaign

The county's pediatric vaccine campaign is off to an encouraging start as nearly 30 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://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. The school-based clinics will be on hiatus after Friday until schools return from holiday break. A [list of upcoming clinics](#) 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. During the break, families can still get their kids vaccinated through their pediatrician or local pharmacy.

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 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 FDA authorized the Pfizer vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds in May; 70 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 Dec. 9, 7.2 million children have tested positive for COVID-19. More than 164,000 child cases were added the past week. Since the first week of September, there have been 2.1 million additional child cases, 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.

Booster update: 16- and 17-year-olds now eligible for shots

Local 16- and 17-year-olds are now eligible for COVID-19 booster shots. Sonoma County health officials on Friday announced the move a day after the federal government recommended the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for that age group.

- [Booster eligibility](#) now includes everyone 16 and older.
- Only the Pfizer booster is available to 16- and 17-year-olds.
- Those 18 and older can use [any COVID-19 vaccine](#) approved by the federal government.
- Prompted by concerns about the Omicron variant, the CDC on Nov. 29 said that all American adults "should" get booster doses of the available coronavirus vaccines.
- 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.
- 122,177 boosters have been administered in Sonoma County since they were authorized for higher-risk groups in September.
- 56,801 boosters have gone to seniors ages 65 and older, or 67.7 percent of that age group.
- More than 65,000 booster doses have been administered to residents under age 65.
- The CDC reports that 55.1 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.

Older Americans have borne brunt of pandemic

Vaccination and frequent testing helps keep friends and family safe. That is especially important for younger residents who may be reluctant to get vaccinated or tested to keep in mind. This is also about keeping their parents and grandparents and other family members safe and out of the hospital. The tragic reality is that older Americans, despite having high vaccination rates, have borne the brunt of this pandemic.

- 75 percent of people who have died of the virus in the United States — or about 600,000 of the 800,000 who have perished so far — have been 65 or older.
- One in 100 older Americans has died from the virus. For people younger than 65, that ratio is closer to 1 in 1,400.
- 72.6 percent of those who have died in Sonoma County of COVID — 302 of 416 to date — have been 65 and older.
- 87 percent of the deaths have been residents who are 55 and older.
- COVID-19 is now the third leading cause of death among Americans 65 and older, after heart disease and cancer.
- It is responsible for about 13 percent of all deaths in that age group since the beginning of 2020, more than diabetes, accidents, Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

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 16 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 [my vaccine record.cdph.ca.gov](https://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. 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.

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.](#)

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. 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). No appointment needed for first, second or booster shots.
- 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) (707) 433-5494
- Fox Home Health also operates a clinic Monday through Friday from 9:30 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. 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. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:45 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 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. The county's [testing page](#) includes a map to 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.” Self-administered rapid antigen tests are available over the counter. The county is working to expand the availability of rapid tests. The White House announced on Dec. 2 that private health insurers would soon have to reimburse patients for over-the-counter rapid tests. It also said it would make 50 million free tests available for uninsured Americans, to be distributed through health clinics and other sites in rural and underserved communities.

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 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, 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 at these locations:

- Coddington (Target lot), 1000 Coddington Center, Santa Rosa, every day, 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 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, Wednesdays and Fridays, 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, 8 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.

- 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.
- California has a [fact sheet](#) summarizing self-quarantine instructions for individuals exposed to COVID-19. Fact sheets are available in many languages on the [COVID-19 Guidance in More Languages](#) page.

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 1,195 COVID-19 cases in schools in the county since classes started in August. Of these cases, 1,055 are students and 140 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 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 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. This is an easy way to help protect our children.

- 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.
- Multicultural and multilingual community members are preferred.

- See our [vaccination clinic calendar](#) for event dates and locations and [sign up through our partner](#).

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. A second dose will be necessary, three weeks after the first.

- The Pfizer vaccine is the only vaccine to receive emergency use authorization so far for those ages 5 to 11.
- About 37,00 children are eligible for the vaccine in Sonoma County.
- Tens of thousands of children have been hospitalized with COVID, [and 761 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 5,973 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.

County Communications Team's COVID outreach efforts this year

COVID-related messaging and outreach by the county's Communications Team reflects the breadth and depth of the county's pandemic response. Here's a summary of this year's communications efforts through November.

- Community briefings: 64 COVID updates via Zoom have been streamed live on Facebook. The briefings are done in English and followed the next day by a briefing in Spanish. They are recorded and made available on the county YouTube channel.
- Posters and flyers: 1,044 English and Spanish pieces, including 568 vaccination flyers, 334 testing flyers, 100 other flyers and 34 clinic and office signs.
- Social media posts: 484 English and Spanish postings, including 322 social messages and graphics, plus 36 FAQs and 126 community briefings, with an average reach of 600,000 per month.
- Advertisements: 56 English and Spanish ads designed and distributed on print, digital and radio platforms, reaching an average of 1.2 million impressions per month.
- Press releases: 152 in English and Spanish.
- Testimonial videos: 34 videos in English and Spanish recorded and distributed on social and with community based organizations.

Spanish communications are a key focus of our county government's commitment to equity and to outreach to the Latinx community. Since May, outreach in Spanish includes:

- 27 weekly 30-second public service announcements; scripts are produced and supplied to several radio stations.
- 5 monthly Indigenous language 30-second public service announcements for KBBF 89.1 FM (Triqui, Chatino, Mixteco). Produce text in Spanish and send for translations and audio production.
- 88 radio interviews with local stations, most in the form of weekly or bi-weekly updates.
- 22 television interviews (all via Zoom).
- 39 community forums as participants.
- 50 bi-weekly bilingual community email updates (Actualización comunitaria). Updates include COVID resources, vaccination and testing sites, and special events. More than 150 stakeholders receive this email.

President Biden's pandemic strategy

President Biden announced a new pandemic strategy on Dec. 2.

Testing highlights:

- Over-the-counter rapid tests will soon become a much bigger part of the Biden administration's response. The White House announced that private health insurers would soon have to reimburse patients for such tests. It also said it would make 50 million free tests available for uninsured Americans, to be distributed through health clinics and other sites in rural and underserved communities.
- For consumers who have insurance, the White House approach will require some legwork. Those Americans will have to buy tests and then submit the receipts for reimbursement under the current plan.
- Private insurers already cover the cost of coronavirus tests administered in doctor's offices or other medical facilities.

Travel changes:

- The United States is requiring international travelers to provide proof of a negative test taken no more than a day before their flights. The move is intended to limit the spread of the new variant.
- Previously, fully vaccinated travelers could provide proof of a negative test taken within 72 hours of departure. While this likely will create another layer of stress for some travelers, results for rapid antigen tests are normally available within a few hours.

- Unvaccinated Americans and children under 18 must take a test within 24 hours of travel. That requirement has not changed.
- There is no testing requirement for flying domestically. Biden did extend the mask mandate for people on airplanes, buses and trains and in terminals and transit hubs through mid-March.

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. Newsom said on Oct. 1. The goal is to have all students in kindergarten through 12th grade vaccinated by next fall once the shots gain final federal approval for everyone 5 and older. The Pfizer vaccine is being administered under emergency authorizations for ages 5 to 15. 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.

Vaccination health orders and guidance

The county on Nov. 1 updated its guidance regarding travel for school and youth sports. School officials and youth sports organizations should verify that all participants, including students, athletes, teachers, coaches, chaperones, and volunteers, are fully vaccinated.

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

- 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. FAQs help explain the change.
- Dr. Mase expanded the scope of an Oct. 1 health order requiring workers at certain health care and congregate facilities to get vaccinated against influenza.
- The county issued a public health recommendation for safely holding public meetings. 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 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.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Sonoma County's Emergency Rental Assistance Program offers financial support to tenants and landlords. Apply on SoCoEmergency.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.
- 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.

Pfizer says its pill prevents severe disease, works against Omicron

A study of Pfizer's COVID pill confirmed that it helps stave off severe disease, the company announced on Tuesday. Pfizer also said its antiviral pill worked in laboratory studies against the Omicron variant, which is surging in South Africa and Europe and is expected to dominate U.S. cases soon.

- Pfizer last month asked the Food and Drug Administration to authorize the pill, known as Paxlovid, based on preliminary data. The new results should strengthen the company's application.
- Pfizer said that if given within five days of the onset of symptoms, Paxlovid reduced the risk of hospitalization and death by 88 percent.
- The results, based on an analysis of 2,246 unvaccinated volunteers at high risk of severe disease, largely match the company's initial, smaller analysis of the clinical trial.
- Pfizer also released preliminary data from a separate trial looking at people with a lower risk. These 662 volunteers included vaccinated people who carried a risk factor for severe disease, as well as

unvaccinated patients with no risk factors. Among this group, Paxlovid reduced the risk of hospitalization and death by 70 percent.

- In both trials, most of the volunteers were infected with the Delta variant. Pfizer said on Tuesday that in laboratory experiments, Paxlovid also performed well against the Omicron variant. The drug jams into one of Omicron's key proteins — called a protease — just as effectively as it does with other variants, Pfizer found.
- The prescription treatment consists of 30 pills given over five days.

Pfizer's rival, Merck, awaits word on authorization of its own antiviral pill, known as molnupiravir. In October, Merck announced that the pill reduced the risk of hospitalization and death from COVID by 50 percent if taken within five days of the onset of symptoms. But once the company carried out a final analysis on all the data, the effectiveness dropped to 30 percent. An FDA advisory committee narrowly voted in favor of molnupiravir's authorization two weeks ago, expressing some concerns about effectiveness and the safety of the pill. The FDA has yet to announce whether it will do so. In the meantime, France has turned down Merck's application, citing its modest effectiveness and concerns about safety.

FDA OKs monoclonal antibody treatment for children under age 12

The Food and Drug Administration on Dec. 3 authorized Eli Lilly's monoclonal antibody treatment for infants and children under age 12 with COVID-19 who are at high risk of becoming severely ill from the virus because they have a condition such as obesity or diabetes. Previously, high-risk COVID patients 12 or older had been eligible to get the drugs, which are typically administered intravenously at a clinic or hospital and have been shown to lower the risk of hospitalization and death.

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.

Surgeon general: Mental health crisis among young people

Young people are facing “devastating” mental health effects as a result of generational challenges that include the pandemic, the U.S. surgeon general warned on Tuesday. Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, the nation’s top physician, made the public advisory [in a 53-page report](#) noting that the pandemic intensified mental health issues that were widespread by spring 2020.

- The report cited significant increases in self-reports of depression, anxiety and emergency-room visits for mental health challenges.
- U.S. emergency room visits for suicide attempts rose 51 percent for adolescent girls in early 2021 as compared to the same period in 2019. The figure rose 4 percent for boys.

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](#).