



Sonoma County  
Key Messages: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)  
December 22, 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](http://SoCoEmergency.org).*

## **Vaccine Distribution**

**Milestones:** As of today, 885,530 doses have been administered to Sonoma County residents. The first doses were administered here a year ago.

Residents fully vaccinated: 357,301 - equal to 75.9 percent of the county's eligible population.

Residents partially vaccinated: 37,913 - equal to 8.1 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, 33 percent of the newly eligible children in the county now are partially or fully vaccinated -- more than 12,000 children, 4,750 of whom are now fully vaccinated. Teens ages 16 and 17 also are now eligible for a booster shot of the Pfizer vaccine.

The county's top priority is to get more of our eligible children vaccinated and protected. As the Omicron variant spreads around the world, our focus remains 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. Breakthrough cases are expected with Omicron, but booster shots are highly effective at preventing the worst outcomes, including severe disease and hospitalization. More than 135,000 local residents have received a booster shot to date, including 71 percent of eligible residents who are 65 and older.

More than 395,000 residents have received at least one dose -- 80 percent percent of the county's total population. That means 84 percent of our eligible 5 and older population is now fully or partially vaccinated. By comparison, 70.4 percent of the eligible California population is fully vaccinated with 8.1 percent partially vaccinated for a total of 78.5 percent.

Nationally, 77.4 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 and book an appointment. The county continues to work with our testing partners to increase the number of testing sites. 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 11.3.
- Our case rate for unvaccinated individuals is 27.3 per 100,000 compared with 5.9 for vaccinated residents.
- Our overall testing positivity rate is 2.4 percent.
- Our equity metric testing positivity rate is 2.4 percent.

### **Update on new cases and hospitalizations**

We expect to see an increase in cases as the Omicron variant takes hold and because of holiday gatherings. This is a winter virus, regardless of the variant. Omicron's impact is still uncertain, but a winter surge seems likely. Local health officials are monitoring hospitalizations closely. COVID-related hospitalizations, an increasingly important barometer, have climbed into the mid 20s, but relatively few COVID patients are in local intensive care units. We also have not seen a jump in deaths here. Our new daily case rate per 100,000 residents remains about half of California's new daily rate and far less than the national average. That is a reflection of our high vaccination rates. Dr. Sundari Mase, Sonoma County's public health officer, reiterates that it is important to remember that being fully vaccinated and boosted means you are still protected against the worst outcomes of COVID — hospitalization and death, even against the Omicron variant. Scientists are still working to determine how lethal the new variant is. They do know it is highly contagious.

Health officials say that is why it is vital to use our trusted preventive measures to do what we can to minimize a surge in cases and hospitalizations. We know what works. Get vaccinated and boosted. Wear a good, well-fitting mask. Increase ventilation. Stay home if you're sick. Get tested, especially before any holiday gatherings. Health officials strongly recommend getting a rapid test before you attend or host gatherings. The unvaccinated still account 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. Mase also urges everyone to get a flu shot.

- To date, 22 COVID patients were in Sonoma County hospitals. Five of those patients were in ICU beds.
- No COVID-related deaths have been reported for December to date after five in November, 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.
- 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 808,000 COVID-19 deaths. The U.S. is averaging about 154,000 new cases a day, up 27 percent in two weeks, and more than 1,300 daily deaths.
- More than 4.48 billion people worldwide have received a dose of a COVID vaccine, equal to about 58.4 percent of the world population.
- A state fact sheet, "Busting Myths," is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

### **Update on the Omicron variant**

One case of the Omicron variant has been reported to date in Sonoma County. Omicron has quickly become the dominant version of the coronavirus in the United States, accounting for 73 percent of new infections last week, federal health officials said on Monday. Two weeks ago, the CDC said Omicron accounted for just 1 percent of U.S. cases; a week ago, it was 13 percent. Delta, which for months had been the dominant form of the virus, accounted for 26 percent of new cases over the last week, the CDC estimated. As recently as the end of November, more than 99 percent of coronaviruses were Delta.

Other key Omicron information:

- The World Health Organization on Nov. 26 deemed Omicron a "[variant of concern](#)" after it was first identified in Botswana and South Africa.
- Omicron has an unusually high number of mutations that have the potential to make the virus more transmissible and less susceptible to existing vaccines.
- Officials in Texas said that an unvaccinated Houston-area man who died on Monday had the Omicron variant. The death appeared to be among the first in the United States to be publicly attributed to Omicron. The man was in his 50s and had previously been infected with the coronavirus.

- Booster doses of both the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are likely to offer a substantial increase in protection against Omicron.
- A Moderna booster shot significantly raises the level of antibodies that can thwart the Omicron variant, the company announced on Monday.
- Pfizer and BioNTech announced earlier this month that a booster shot of their vaccine also increased the level of antibodies against Omicron.
- A growing body of preliminary research suggests the vaccines used in most of the world offer almost no defense against becoming infected by the Omicron variant. All vaccines still seem to provide a significant degree of protection against serious illness from Omicron, which is the most crucial goal. But only the Pfizer and Moderna shots, when reinforced by a booster, appear to have initial success at stopping infections, and these vaccines are unavailable in most of the world. The other shots — including those from AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson and vaccines manufactured in China and Russia — do little to nothing to stop the spread of Omicron, early research shows.
- After the variant sent new cases to record levels in South Africa, case counts have now started falling, and are down by more than 20 percent in the last week, researchers in the country said.
- Two new studies released today suggest that Omicron infections more often result in mild illness, compared with previous variants of the coronavirus. The research, conducted in Britain, indicated that Omicron is less likely to put people in hospitals, offering hope that the current surge may not be quite as catastrophic as feared, despite skyrocketing caseloads in much of the world.
- Israel said Tuesday that the country will administer a fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, in a bid to curb the spread of the variant. Israel is believed to be the first country to offer a fourth round. Teams will begin to give fourth doses to those over 60, as well as to medical personnel.
- The true impact of the virus is not always felt immediately, with hospitalizations and deaths often lagging well behind initial outbreaks.
- Most PCR and rapid antigen tests can detect Omicron — the FDA has noted there are only a few tests that don't — but results do not indicate to the user which variant they are infected with.
- The purchase of at-home coronavirus tests will be capped at Walgreens and CVS locations nationwide as demand for kits continues to surge, the chains announced Tuesday. CVS added a limit of six test kits per purchase in stores and online; Walgreens' limit is four kits. Both chains warned of temporary shortages.

### **Gov. Newsom announces booster mandate for health workers**

Gov. Gavin Newsom today announced new booster requirements and testing measures as the Omicron variant becomes the dominant COVID-19 strain in

the nation. The booster requirement for health care workers will mitigate potential staffing shortages while helping to safeguard the state's hospital capacity and protect the health and safety of Californians. Combined with the new federal policies announced Tuesday, these actions will help ensure everyone in California has access to testing throughout the holiday season and that K-12 public school students can return to school safely.

"Two doses are great. A booster is a game changer," Newsom said at a health clinic in Alameda County. He said the definition of full dosing is moving toward three shots. He also said that more than half of the positive test samples sequenced in California recently have been found to involve Omicron, probably a conservative estimate of its actual prevalence. "As the Omicron variant spreads rapidly across the country and circulates in all regions of the state, we're taking immediate, proactive steps to protect Californians with boosters and expanded access to testing," Newsom said. "The state is also redoubling our efforts to keep kids safe and keep schools open. We will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities by making at-home testing kits available to every K-12 public school student as they head back to the classroom from winter break."

- By Feb. 1, health care workers and all employees in high-risk congregate settings, including nursing homes, will be required to get their booster. In the interim, all health care staff that have not received their booster must test for COVID-19 twice weekly until they are up to date on their vaccines.
- To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our schools, the state is also increasing the availability of at-home COVID-19 tests so K-12 public-school students can be tested as they return to school from winter break. In early December, the California Department of Public Health distributed about 2 million tests to schools for this purpose. CDPH will expand those efforts by providing 1 to 2 rapid tests for every student. CDPH will work with local education and health partners to distribute those test kits as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- To ensure every Californian has access to testing, the state will also be expanding antigen test availability and expanding hours of operation at state-sponsored OptumServe sites that are already at capacity. The state has established 6,288 testing sites statewide over the course of the pandemic, 31 percent of the nation's testing sites.
- Since August, the state has purchased 12 million over-the-counter tests. The state health department is distributing an additional 6 million tests to community partners serving disproportionately impacted Californians and 4 million to local health jurisdictions.
- [Additional information](#) related to the governor's announcement.

- Sonoma County's health officer plans to issue new health orders this week regarding booster shots.

### **President Biden's response includes 500 million free rapid tests**

President Biden accelerated his administration's pandemic response again on Tuesday, telling Americans that "we should all be concerned about Omicron, but not panicked." The president said the government will buy a half-billion rapid coronavirus tests and distribute them free to Americans; create new vaccination and testing sites; and send 1,000 military medical professionals to help hospitals nationwide.

- The president reminded Americans that, despite the highly infectious new variant, the situation today is far different from when the pandemic began in early 2020, when there were no vaccines or treatments and vital medical equipment was in short supply.
- He said, as he has in the past, that there was no need for lockdowns now. "This is not March of 2020. Two hundred million people are vaccinated. We're prepared; we know more," the president said. "We all want this to be over, but we're still in it."
- His pleas are not political, he emphasized. He noted that former President Donald Trump has gotten his booster shot, and he said it's Americans' "patriotic duty" to get vaccinated.
- "It's the only responsible thing to do," the president said. "Omicron is serious and potentially deadly business for unvaccinated people."
- The 500 million tests that the administration intends to purchase will be available starting in January. People will use a new website to order their tests, which will then be sent by U.S. mail at no charge.
- Biden promised to use the Defense Production Act to help manufacturers better meet the demand for testing.
- The first new federally supported testing site will open in New York this week. White House officials said they're working with Google so that people will be able to find them by searching "free COVID test near me."

### **Rapid testing urged by local health officials during holidays**

Residents are urged by Sonoma 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 often cost \$15 to \$25 for a two-test kit, which can be prohibitive for regular use. 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 or the day before to confirm your status. How to use rapid home tests, what's on the market and how they work.

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

Local 16- and 17-year-olds are now eligible for booster shots. The federal government on Dec. 9 recommended the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for that age group. Booster eligibility now includes everyone 16 and older. Sonoma County and other county public health agencies across the Bay Area on Friday urged everyone eligible to get vaccinated and, if eligible, get a booster shot right away to protect against the Omicron variant.

- 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 to schedule a booster shot. Vaccine supplies may be limited at the county's fixed and pop-up clinics.
- 135,076 boosters have been administered in Sonoma County since they were authorized for the first groups in September.
- 59,572 boosters have gone to seniors ages 65 and older, or 70.8 percent of that age group.
- More than 75,000 booster doses have been administered to residents under age 65.
- The CDC reports that 62.2 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.

### **California State University, UC to require boosters for students, staff**

California State University, the nation's largest four-year-public university, said today that it will require students, faculty and staff at its 23 campuses to get booster shots for the spring semester amid concerns about the Omicron variant. The mandate, which allows for medical and religious

exemptions, requires the boosters by Feb. 28, or six months after the final dose of vaccination. Sonoma State University has about 8,700 students. The California State University system has about 485,000 students and 55,000 faculty and staff. The announcement comes a day after the University of California announced a similar mandate for its 10 campuses.

### **State reimposes indoor mask mandate; minimal local impact**

California is again requiring residents to wear masks in indoor public settings, with case rates rising and 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 in Sonoma County are limited. This order only applies to counties that did not have indoor masking mandates that apply to all irrespective of vaccine status. This includes exemptions. That means there will be no changes for now 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.
- California's updated Protect Yourself and Your Family from COVID-19 fact sheet is now available in Spanish. The fact sheet was updated to align with current indoor masking requirements for public places.

### **Update on Sonoma County's pediatric vaccine campaign**

The county's pediatric vaccine campaign is off to an encouraging start as 33 percent of the eligible children ages 5 to 11 have received at least one dose since vaccines became available in early November. Nearly 12 percent of those children are now fully vaccinated. Parents are encouraged to reach out to their pediatrician or a local pharmacy to find a vaccine for their children now that the CDC has endorsed the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. Pharmacy appointments can be made through Myturn.ca.gov.

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 clinics will be on hiatus until schools return from break in January. A list of upcoming clinics is on the 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 let parents ask questions. They are available for viewing on the [county's YouTube channel](#).

- The county's pediatric vaccine campaign is planned with a focus on equity. The sites for school-based clinics are in areas with high case rates, a high number of English learners, and with lower vaccination rates. Those doses are intended for those school populations but no one will be turned away who is eligible for a vaccine.
- All doses will be available at no cost to children or their parents.
- Parents are asked to bring a photo ID with date of birth as well as medical and prescription insurance card (if insured). Nobody will be turned away for lack of ID.
- Consent forms will be required if a child is not with a parent or guardian; consent forms are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- The campaign seeks to vaccinate half the eligible children ages 5 to 11 by Jan. 31, and 70 percent by Feb. 28.
- The CDC on Nov. 2 endorsed the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. Children will receive one-third of the dose authorized for those 12 and older, delivered by smaller needles and stored in smaller vials. A second dose will be necessary, three weeks after the first.
- The FDA authorized the Pfizer vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds in May; more than 70 percent of that age group in Sonoma County has received at least one dose, with 63.5 percent fully vaccinated.
- 7.4 million children have tested positive for COVID. Nearly 170,000 child cases were added the past week, an increase of 28 percent over the last two weeks. Since September, there have been 2.3 million 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.

## **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.
- Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, said this weekend that all travel presents risks, but vaccinated and boosted people can go ahead with their trips, as long as they're following precautions.

Some destinations and events require a COVID-19 test or proof of vaccination. Research the requirements of your airline, destination or event to ensure you are prepared. Don't wait until the last minute to schedule an appointment. The latest [CDC guidelines for travel can be viewed here](#).

You can obtain a digital copy of your California vaccine record from [my vaccine record.cdph.ca.gov](#). If there are problems with the digital vaccine record, they can take two to three weeks to fix. Keep your paper CDC card in a secure place; make copies and save pictures on your phone.

### **Trust texts from 23393**

California has produced a [video informing residents](#) that if they receive a text from the number 23393, it's an important message from California's COVID-19 response team and their local health department. Calconnect, the contact tracing database, uses a virtual assistant to reach out to COVID

cases and contacts by text prior to them being called by a contact tracer/case investigator. The video is also available in Spanish.

### **Local vaccination strategy and availability**

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

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

- Sutter operates a daily clinic at 2360 Mendocino Ave. in Santa Rosa from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The clinic will be open Friday (Christmas Eve) until 6 p.m. and closed on Christmas.
- The Roseland Community Center clinic is operated by Fox Home Health at 779 Sebastopol Road. It is normally open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (ages 5-plus). No appointment needed for first, second or booster shots. Closed on Friday and Saturday (Christmas Eve and Christmas).
- Rohnert Park Community Center clinic at 5401 Snyder Lane is open Tuesday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (ages 5-plus) Appointments needed. Closed on Christmas.
- Alliance Medical Center's clinic at 1381 University Ave. in Healdsburg is open Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Closed on Friday (Christmas Eve) this week. 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. Closed on Friday (Christmas Eve) this week.
- Rohnert Park Health Center operates a clinic at 5900 State Farm Dr. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week from 10 a.m. to 1:45 (ages 12-plus) and 3 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. (ages 5-plus). Closed on Friday and Saturday (Christmas Eve and Christmas). 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. Closed on Friday this week.
- Sonoma Valley: Sonoma Valley Health Partners holds clinics at different sites, including at schools. Go to [svhpvaccines.org](http://svhpvaccines.org) for details.

### **Testing updates, including local availability**

Testing is available throughout the county even as demand has increased since Thanksgiving. The county is now averaging nearly 3,000 tests a day. 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 and online but they can be hard currently due to demand. The county is working to expand the availability of rapid tests. President Biden announced on Tuesday that the federal government would buy 500 million rapid tests and provide them for free to Americans starting in January. People will be able to request them through a new website that will be set up and they will be mailed at no cost.

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

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

- 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. Closed on Christmas.

**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. Closed on Christmas.
- 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 Thursday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Closed on Friday (Christmas Eve).

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

- Monte Rio Community Center, 20488 Hwy. 116, Monte Rio, Mondays

- Cotati Park and Ride, St. Joseph Way at Highways 116 and 101, Tuesdays and Wednesdays
- Petaluma Valley Baptist Church, 580 Sonoma Mountain Pkwy., Tuesdays, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Galvin Park, 3330 Yulupa Ave., Santa Rosa, Thursdays.
- Salvation Army, 721 S. McDowell Blvd., Petaluma, Friday (Christmas Eve) 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- A Place to Play Park, 2375 W. 3rd St., Santa Rosa, Friday (Christmas Eve) 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- Alliance Medical Center, 1381 University Ave., Healdsburg, Saturdays. Closed on Christmas.
- Knox Presbyterian Church, 1650 W. 3rd St., Santa Rosa, Saturdays. Closed on Christmas.
- 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, Sunday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. [cur.tv/coddington](http://cur.tv/coddington) Closed on Friday and Saturday (Christmas Eve and Christmas).
- Fiesta Plaza, 200 Siesta Way, Sonoma, Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. [cur.tv/fiestaplaza](http://cur.tv/fiestaplaza) Closed on Friday (Christmas Eve).
- Windsor Bluebird Center, 25 Bluebird Dr., Sunday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. [cur.tv/windsor](http://cur.tv/windsor)
- Rohnert Park Community Center, 5401 Snyder Lane, Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. [cur.tv/rohnertpark](http://cur.tv/rohnertpark)
- New Life Christian Fellowship, 1315 Rand St., Petaluma, Tuesday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 6 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](http://cur.tv/sebastopol)
- Healdsburg Community Center, 1557 Healdsburg Ave., Mondays, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. [cur.tv/healdsburg](http://cur.tv/healdsburg)
- Cloverdale High School, 509 N. Cloverdale Blvd., Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. [cur.tv/cloverdale](http://cur.tv/cloverdale)
- West County Community Services, 15010 Armstrong Woods Road, Guerneville, Wednesdays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. [cur.tv/west](http://cur.tv/west)
- Resurrection Parish, 303 Stonypoint Road, Santa Rosa, Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. [cur.tv/resurrection](http://cur.tv/resurrection)
- Geyserville Elementary School, 21485 Geyserville Ave., Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. [cur.tv/geyserville](http://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](http://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](mailto: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.
- 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.

### **Updated local order requires quarantine when exposed to COVID-19**

Sonoma County Health Officer Dr. Sundari Mase on Tuesday updated quarantine rules to include people, with limited exceptions, who have had exposure to a known or suspected COVID-19 case. The [revised order](#) supersedes previous health orders and requires anyone, fully vaccinated or not, who has had close contact with a person who has, or is likely to have, COVID, to follow established [quarantine instructions](#). Dr. Mase also issued a [new order regarding isolation](#) measures for those who test positive. Key information:

- Quarantine slows the spread of COVID by restricting the movement of those who might be infected so that they cannot infect others.
- Close contact occurs when a person is within 6 feet of someone who is a known or suspected COVID-19 case for a cumulative 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
- Even if they are not experiencing symptoms, people who have had close contact must quarantine for 10 days, unless they get a negative COVID test on day five or later. In that case, if they remain symptom-

free, they can end quarantine after day seven, though they must continue to monitor symptoms for 14 days.

- Those quarantined must stay in their home or another residence for the specified period except to receive medical care or during an emergency. If they become sick with a fever or other COVID-19 symptoms, they should isolate themselves from others at their home.
- Some of the exceptions to this order include first responders and health care professionals. Under certain circumstances, first responders that are asymptomatic, considered essential to workplace operations, and follow other testing and monitoring protocol, can return to work after close contact.

### **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 1,249 COVID-19 cases in schools in the county since classes started in August. Of these cases, 1,106 are students and 143 are staff members. The county is posting [school cases and other related data online](#).

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

### **Volunteers needed to help with pediatric vaccination campaign**

Sonoma County is seeking volunteers to assist with our pediatric vaccination mission. We are particularly looking for people with Spanish interpretation abilities to assist parents and families at school clinics as well as health care providers who can help clinically with vaccine administration and answer vaccine questions. The school-based clinics are on hiatus until January, with several clinics scheduled for the first week of January.

- 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 in early January for which 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](#).

## **FDA approves first COVID pill that is effective against severe illness**

The Food and Drug Administration today authorized the first pill for COVID-19, offering a highly effective defense against severe illness that will arrive as the country endures another major surge. The drug, developed by Pfizer and known as Paxlovid, is authorized for COVID patients age 12 and over who are vulnerable to becoming severely ill because they are older or have medical conditions such as obesity or diabetes. Tens of millions of Americans — including vaccinated and unvaccinated people — will be eligible if they get infected with the virus. The treatment could be available within a few days.

- Pfizer's laboratory studies indicate that its pills are likely to work against the Omicron variant.
- The treatment is meant to be taken as 30 pills over five days.
- A clinical trial indicated that Paxlovid was highly effective when taken soon after an infection. In a final analysis of a key study conducted while the Delta variant was surging, Pfizer's drug reduced the risk of hospitalization or death by 88 percent when given to high-risk unvaccinated volunteers within five days of the start of their symptoms.
- The government has ordered enough of Pfizer's pills to cover 10 million people, at a cost of \$530 per patient; supply will be limited at first.
- Paxlovid appears to be substantially more effective than a similar antiviral pill from Merck, known as molnupiravir, that is still awaiting authorization by the FDA. In a clinical trial, Merck's drug reduced risk of hospitalization and death for high-risk patients by 30 percent.

## **2 of 3 antibody treatments may not be effective against Omicron**

Two of the three monoclonal antibody treatments that doctors have depended on to keep COVID patients from becoming seriously ill do not appear to thwart the latest version of the virus. The one such treatment that is still likely to work against Omicron is now so scarce that many doctors and hospitals have run through their supplies, the New York Times reported on Tuesday.

- Monoclonal antibodies have become a mainstay of COVID treatment, shown to be highly effective in keeping high-risk patients from being hospitalized.
- Federal health officials plan to assess at the end of this week whether to pause shipments of the Eli Lilly and Regeneron products to individual states, based on how dominant Omicron becomes in different regions of the country.
- The one monoclonal antibody treatment that has performed well against Omicron in laboratory experiments is also the most recently authorized: sotrovimab, made by GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Biotechnology and cleared in May.



## **Vaccine update: CDC recommends Pfizer, Moderna over J&J**

There are currently three different COVID-19 vaccines available to the public. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has full FDA approval for persons ages 16 and older, and emergency Use Authorization for use in persons 5 to 15 years of age. The Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines have been approved by the FDA for emergency use; however, the CDC recommends the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines as preferred options to the Johnson & Johnson vaccine when possible.

- The CDC's expert advisers cited increasing evidence that Johnson & Johnson's shots can trigger a rare blood clot disorder now linked to dozens of cases and at least nine deaths in the United States in the last year. The risk was greatest among women 30 to 49, estimated at 1 in 100,000 who had received the company's shot.
- The J&J vaccine is not being removed from the market. It will remain an option for people who are "unable or unwilling" to receive the more popular shots from Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech, the CDC said.
- 16 million people in the United States have received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine as their primary immunization, compared to 73 million fully immunized with Moderna's and 114 million with the Pfizer shots.
- The Food and Drug Administration on Aug. 23 granted full approval to Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine for people 16 and older, making it the first vaccine to move beyond emergency use status in the United States.

## **OSHA plans to start enforcing work vaccine mandate in January**

The federal government in November said large employers would need to have their workers fully vaccinated by early next year, or make sure the workers were tested weekly. The mandate would impact about 80 million Americans and take effect on Jan. 4. With January approaching, confusion still surrounds the Labor Department's vaccine mandate, with legal battles, shifting deadlines, testing capacity issues and rising COVID case counts contributing to the uncertainty of what will happen. Here's what we know:

- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration said Saturday it will begin enforcing the federal vaccine mandate for businesses with more than 100 employees, and could start issuing fines as early as Jan. 10. The decision came one day after the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati said the mandate could move forward as scheduled.
- On Saturday, OSHA urged employers to start working to get in compliance. OSHA also gave employers some leeway, pushing back full enforcement of the rule until February.

- For companies struggling to meet OSHA's standards because of testing shortages, the Labor Department said Sunday that it would "consider refraining from enforcement" if the employer has shown a good-faith effort to comply.
- The Labor Department said Sunday that its rule did not currently include booster shots, though it strongly encourages them.
- Appeals were immediately filed with the Supreme Court.
- The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) maintains an occupational safety and health plan that is approved and monitored by the federal OSHA. As a "state plan state," California is required to adopt occupational safety and health standards "at least as effective" as federal OSHA's.

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 806,000 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.

### **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. The Pfizer vaccine is being administered under emergency authorizations for ages 5 to 15. That means the mandate likely will not impact this school year. Since 1995, California has mandated 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/](https://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.

## **Emergency Rental Assistance Program**

Sonoma County's Emergency Rental Assistance Program offers financial support to tenants and landlords. Apply on [SoCoEmergency.org/ERAP](https://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.

## **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 Dec. 7. 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](#).