



Sonoma County  
Key Messages: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)  
December 29, 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, 901,498 doses have been administered to Sonoma County residents.

Residents fully vaccinated: 360,689 - equal to 76.7 percent of the county's eligible population.

Residents partially vaccinated: 36,656 - equal to 7.8 percent of the county's eligible population

All California residents 5 and older are now eligible for vaccination against COVID-19. As the Omicron variant spreads, our focus is on encouraging booster shots and testing. We want everyone to get their first and second doses to get more people vaccinated and protected, but we need to increase our rate of booster shots administered because of the protection they offer against severe illness. We are seeing more breakthrough cases as Omicron spreads, but booster shots are highly effective at preventing the worst outcomes, including severe disease, hospitalization and death. More than 146,000 local residents have received a booster shot to date, including 73 percent of eligible residents who are 65 and older. But only a third of eligible residents under the age 50 have received a booster.

Children ages 5 to 17 can only receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The county is working to get more of our eligible children vaccinated and protected. More than 37,000 children ages 5 to 11 in the county are eligible to receive the vaccine. To date, 34 percent of the newly eligible children in the county now are partially or fully vaccinated -- nearly 13,000 children, 6,856 of whom are now fully vaccinated. Teens ages 16 and 17 also are now eligible for a booster shot of the Pfizer vaccine.

More than 397,000 residents have received at least one dose -- 80.4 percent percent of the county's total population. That means 84.5 percent of our eligible 5 and older population is now fully or partially vaccinated. By comparison, 70.8 percent of the eligible California population is fully

vaccinated with 8.2 percent partially vaccinated. Nationally, 77.7 percent of the eligible population is fully or partially vaccinated.

The County's vaccine clinics page is continually updated. The pop-up calendar shows what clinics are operating each day. The county's testing page makes it easy to find a site and book an appointment. 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 16.6.
- Our case rate for unvaccinated individuals is 51.9 per 100,000 compared with 7.9 for vaccinated residents.
- Our overall testing positivity rate is 3.4 percent.
- Our equity metric testing positivity rate is 3.5 percent.

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

We are seeing an expected surge in cases, especially among the unvaccinated, as the Omicron variant takes hold and because of holiday gatherings. This is a winter virus, regardless of the variant. Local health officials are monitoring hospitalizations closely. COVID-related hospitalizations, an increasingly important barometer, have remained stable and relatively few COVID patients are in local intensive care units. We also have not seen a jump in deaths here, although we recently reported our first two COVID-related deaths for December. 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 working to determine how dangerous the new variant is. They do know it is highly contagious.

Health officials say that is why it is vital to keep doing what we can to minimize new 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 if they get COVID and they are 13 times more likely to die 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.

- On Monday, 24 COVID patients were in Sonoma County hospitals. Five of those patients were in ICU beds.
- Two COVID-related deaths have been reported for December in the county. Five deaths were reported 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 418 reported COVID-19 deaths that have occurred in Sonoma County have been unvaccinated residents. The latest death, reported Monday, was an unvaccinated woman between 70 and 80 years old with underlying health conditions who died on Dec. 8.
- The seven-day average of daily U.S. cases set a new record as it topped 267,000 on Tuesday, up 126 percent in two weeks. The previous daily record of 251,232 was set on Jan. 11. Daily U.S. COVID deaths averaged more than 1,200 over the past seven days. The United States has recorded 819,000 COVID-19 deaths.

### **CDC recommends shorter quarantine for those without symptoms**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Monday shortened by half the isolation period for people who contract the coronavirus, saying that those without symptoms could safely resume mixing with others just five days after their positive test results. The new recommendations “balance what we know about the spread of the virus and the protection provided by vaccination and booster doses. These updates ensure people can safely continue their daily lives,” said Dr. Rochelle Walensky, CDC director. CDC officials said the guidance is in keeping with growing evidence that people with the coronavirus are most infectious in the two days before and three days after symptoms develop. The guidance is not a mandate; it's a recommendation to employers and state and local officials. The isolation rules are for people who are infected. They are the same for people who are unvaccinated, partly vaccinated, fully vaccinated or boosted.

The new CDC isolation guidelines say:

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

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

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

### **County urges employers to require proof of booster**

Employers should immediately require all workers to get a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, if eligible for one, or get tested at least twice weekly for COVID under new guidelines issued Tuesday by Sonoma County Health Officer Dr. Sundari Mase. The guidelines are voluntary but strongly recommended to help mitigate a surge in cases and protect the health of workers, their families and vulnerable community members. "COVID-19 cases are increasing again in Sonoma County, but we can keep both our community and our economy healthy if employers require workers to get a booster shot as soon as they are eligible for one," Dr. Mase said. "People who choose not to get vaccinated or boosted should be tested for COVID at least twice a week to detect outbreaks quickly and reduce the amount of time infected workers can unknowingly transmit the virus to others." In addition to twice-weekly testing, employers should consider requiring unvaccinated and unboosted employees, if eligible for a booster, to wear an FDA-cleared surgical mask or respirator in indoor work settings. "Given how contagious the Omicron variant is proving to be, cloth masks are just not as effective in stopping the spread of the virus," said Dr. Mase. "We recommend that everyone upgrade to a surgical mask or something equivalent."

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

The county mandate expanded a state public health order requiring health care workers, adult care facilities and direct care workers, and correctional facility and detention center health care staff to receive booster shots. Employers can require workers to be vaccinated, including having a booster. The County of Sonoma, the region's largest employer, is evaluating its COVID-19 vaccination policy and procedures with the goal of implementing Dr. Mase's latest recommendation for its workforce as soon as possible. The health orders and guidance are on the county's health orders page.

### **Sonoma County rescinds face mask exemption**

Sonoma County today joined four other Bay Area counties in rescinding exemptions to local public health orders that allowed stable groups of fully vaccinated people to remove their masks indoors in some workplaces, gyms, churches and other public settings. Everyone, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a mask in all indoor public settings, effective 12:01 a.m. Thursday. Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin and San Francisco counties and the city of Berkeley removed similar exemptions in a coordinated effort to blunt a regional surge in COVID-19 cases. Sonoma County has required facial coverings in most indoor public settings since August.

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

"Increasingly, we are seeing the virus that causes COVID-19 spread among people who are fully vaccinated," Dr. Mase said. "The vaccine works. It greatly reduces the chances you will become severely ill or die if you contract the virus, but it won't stop you from infecting others. If they are immunocompromised or unvaccinated, they could require hospitalization and even die. Wearing a well-fitted mask indoors in public settings will help keep you and those around you safe by slowing the transmission of COVID-19."

Nearly 80 cases a day are being detected in Sonoma County among people who are fully vaccinated, an all-time high.

- Sonoma County health officials are aware of at least two COVID outbreaks following holiday parties where stable cohorts of fully vaccinated people gathered indoors without wearing masks, resulting in nearly 40 known positive cases to date.

- While breakthrough COVID cases in vaccinated people are rising, unvaccinated people are exposed to the greatest risks.
- The number of county cases detected daily in unvaccinated people has more than tripled since Thanksgiving, from 16.9 per 100,000 residents to 51.9 per 100,000 residents, the highest since late August.
- New daily cases detected among vaccinated residents increased from 6.9 per 100,000 residents to 7.9 per 100,000 during the same period.
- The state has a new guide on getting the most out of masking. Cloth masks are not as effective against the Omicron variant.

### **Omicron updates: CDC decreases initial estimate of cases**

The CDC on Tuesday estimated that the Omicron variant now accounts for about 59 percent of all COVID cases in the United States, a decrease from the agency's previous estimate of 73 percent in the week ending Dec. 18. In its revision, the CDC said the variant accounted for about 23 percent of cases that week. Experts said they were not surprised by the revisions, given that the CDC's estimates are rough guesses. Fourteen cases of the variant have been reported to date in Sonoma County; health officials say there are many more cases of the variant in the county.

The California Department of Public Health reported that data as of Dec. 22 indicate that Omicron cases are present in most regions of the state.

- Mutations consistent with Omicron have been detected in increasing proportions in wastewater in multiple regions throughout California.
- At least three health systems in California have reported 50 percent to 70 percent of COVID-19 cases are consistent with Omicron (full sequencing results are pending).
- Genetic sequencing does not represent real-time data, as sequencing generally occurs several days or more after initial tests are positive.

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.
- Booster doses of both the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are likely to offer a substantial increase in protection against Omicron.
- Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, the CDC director, said today that even as U.S. cases had increased by 60 percent over the past week, hospital admissions and deaths were hinting at a milder wave of the virus. Citing a series of international studies showing milder Omicron outcomes, Dr. Anthony S. Fauci said at the same news conference that "the pattern and disparity between cases and hospitalizations strongly suggest that there will be a lower hospitalization-to-case ratio when the situation becomes more clear."

- Even if Omicron does cause mostly mild illness, the sheer magnitude of cases could escalate hospitalizations at a time when many medical centers in the U.S. and the world are already full.
- 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.

Days before the United States had its first confirmed case of Omicron on Dec. 1, health officials in Nebraska began looking into six probable cases of infection in one household, among them a 48-year-old unvaccinated man who had recently returned from Nigeria. On Dec. 2, Nebraska identified the Omicron variant as the cause in all six, who ranged in age from 11 to 48.

- A study of the family released on Tuesday by the CDC suggested that Omicron may have a shorter incubation period than previous variants: about 72 hours. It may take as little as three days for people to develop symptoms, become contagious and test positive, compared with four to six days with Delta infections and the original coronavirus.
- Only one member of the household was fully vaccinated, and all but one member, including the traveler, had confirmed infections in 2020.
- The study reported the family members experienced mild symptoms.
- A study in Norway that examined a large cluster of individuals who were infected with the variant at a Christmas party on Nov. 26 also suggested that the incubation period was around three days.

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

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

- By Feb. 1, health care workers and all employees in high-risk congregate settings, including nursing homes, will be required to get their booster.
- To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in schools, the state is also increasing the availability of at-home tests so K-12 public-school students can be tested as they return to school from winter break. In early December, the California Department of Public Health distributed 2 million tests to schools for this purpose. CDPH will expand those efforts by providing one to two rapid tests for every student. CDPH will

work with local education and health partners to distribute those test kits as quickly and efficiently as possible.

- The state will also be expanding antigen test availability and expanding hours of operation at state-sponsored OptumServe sites that are already at capacity.
- The state health department is distributing an additional 6 million tests to community partners serving disproportionately impacted Californians and 4 million to local health jurisdictions.
- Additional information related to the governor's announcement.

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

President Biden last week accelerated his administration's pandemic response. The president on Dec. 21 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. 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 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.
- 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. The website won't be functional until after the first batch of test kits have been delivered in January.

### **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 cost \$14 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 Dec. 17 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.
- 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.
- 146,305 boosters have been administered in Sonoma County since they were authorized for the first groups in September.
- 61,668 boosters have gone to seniors ages 65 and older, or 73.1 percent of that age group.
- More than 84,000 booster doses have been administered to residents under age 65.
- The CDC reports that 67.3 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 said on Dec. 22 that it will require students, faculty and staff at its 23 campuses, including Sonoma State, to get booster shots for the spring semester amid concerns about the Omicron variant.

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

- Santa Rosa Junior College President Frank Chong said he expects a booster decision next month after SRJC returns from break.

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

More than 34 percent of the county's eligible children ages 5 to 11 have received at least one dose since the vaccine became available in early November. Nearly 19 percent of those children are now fully vaccinated. Parents are encouraged to reach out to their pediatrician or a local pharmacy to find a vaccine for their children now that the CDC has endorsed the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. Pharmacy appointments can be made through [Myturn.ca.gov](https://myturn.ca.gov).

Dozens of vaccination clinics have been held at designated schools throughout the county to serve people who do not have convenient or affordable access to healthcare providers. More than 40 such clinics are planned. The school clinics are on hiatus until schools return from break in January. Numerous school-based clinics are scheduled starting Jan. 3. 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 children vaccinated through their pediatrician or local pharmacy.

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

- The county's pediatric vaccine campaign is planned with a focus on equity. The sites for school-based clinics are in areas with high case rates, a high number of English learners, and with lower vaccination rates. Those doses are intended for those school populations but no one will be turned away who is eligible for a vaccine.
- All doses will be available at no cost to children or their parents.
- Parents are asked to bring a photo ID with date of birth as well as medical and prescription insurance card (if insured). Nobody will be turned away for lack of ID.
- Consent forms will be required if a child is not with a parent or guardian; consent forms are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- The campaign seeks to vaccinate half the eligible children ages 5 to 11 by Jan. 31, and 70 percent by Feb. 28.
- The CDC on Nov. 2 endorsed the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. Children receive one-third of the dose authorized for

those 12 and older, delivered by smaller needles and stored in smaller vials. A second dose will be necessary, three weeks after the first.

- The FDA authorized the Pfizer vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds in May.
- Cases among U.S. children are extremely high and increasing. For the week ending Dec. 23, nearly 199,000 child COVID-19 cases were reported, a 50 percent increase since the beginning of December. More than 7.5 million children have tested positive for COVID, representing 1 in 10 children, according to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).
- Dr. Brian Prystowsky, a local Sutter Health pediatrician, [explains the benefits of the pediatric vaccine](#) in this video.
- Vaccine testimonials by local parents of children who received the pediatric vaccine are [now available](#) on the county's YouTube channel.
- [Vaccine testimonials](#) by doctors, students and local parents are also available on the Sonoma County Office of Education website.

### **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 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. 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](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.

### **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 (New Year's Eve) until 6 p.m. and closed on Saturday.
- The Roseland Community Center clinic is operated by Fox Home Health at 779 Sebastopol Road. It is open Wednesday and Thursday this week from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (ages 5-plus). No appointment needed for first, second or booster shots. Closed on Friday and Saturday (New Year's Eve and New Year's Day).
- Rohnert Park Community Center clinic at 5401 Snyder Lane is open Tuesday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Friday (New Year's Eve) from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (ages 5-plus) Appointments needed.
- 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's clinic is normally open Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1400 N. Dutton Ave., Suite 17, Santa Rosa. It will be closed on New Year's 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 (New Year's Eve and New Year's Day). 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 Thursday 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 (New Year's Eve) this week.

- Sonoma Valley: Sonoma Valley Health Partners holds clinics at different sites, including at schools. Go to [svhpvaccines.org](https://svhpvaccines.org) for details.

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

Testing is available throughout the county even as demand has increased. 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 to find due to demand. The county is working to expand the availability of rapid tests. President Biden announced on Dec. 21 that the federal government would buy 500 million rapid tests and provide them for free to Americans starting in January. People will be able to request them through a new website that will be set up and they will be mailed at no cost.

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

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

- Roseland Community Center, 779 Sebastopol Road, open Wednesday and Thursday this week, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Closed on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

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

- Petaluma's Foundry Wharf, 625 Second St., Petaluma, Sunday and Monday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Closed on New Year's Day.
- 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.

**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 (New Year's Eve) 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- A Place to Play Park, 2375 W. 3rd St., Santa Rosa, Friday (New Year's Eve) 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- Alliance Medical Center, 1381 University Ave., Healdsburg, Saturdays. Closed on New Year's Day.
- Knox Presbyterian Church, 1650 W. 3rd St., Santa Rosa, Saturdays. Closed on New Year's Day.
- 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 (New Year's Eve and New Year's Day).
- 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 (New Year's 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, Monday and Tuesday, 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**

County Health Officer Dr. Sundari Mase on Dec. 21 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.

### **Trust texts from 23393**

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

### **Update on cases in local schools**

The county, in collaboration with the Sonoma County Office of Education, is implementing measures to keep our schools as safe as possible. There have been 1,274 COVID-19 cases in schools in the county since classes started in August. Of these cases, 1,130 are students and 144 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 on Dec. 22 [authorized](#) the first pill for COVID-19, offering a highly effective defense against severe illness. The drug, developed by Pfizer and known as Paxlovid, is authorized for COVID patients age 12 and over who are vulnerable to becoming severely ill because they are older or have medical conditions such as obesity or diabetes.

- Pfizer's laboratory studies indicate that its pills are likely to work against the Omicron variant.
- The treatment is meant to be taken as 30 pills over five days.
- A clinical trial indicated that Paxlovid was highly effective when taken soon after an infection. Pfizer's drug reduced the risk of hospitalization or death by 88 percent when given to high-risk unvaccinated volunteers within five days of the start of their symptoms.
- The government has ordered enough of Pfizer's pills to cover 10 million people, at a cost of \$530 per patient; supply will be limited at first.
- Pfizer is expected to provide enough pills for 265,000 Americans before the end of January. The federal government on Thursday [allocated](#) the first 65,000 treatment courses to states to be distributed. The government will also ship the pills directly to community health centers.
- Paxlovid appears to be substantially more effective than a similar antiviral pill from Merck (see below), known as molnupiravir, that was approved Thursday by the FDA. In a clinical trial, Merck's drug reduced risk of hospitalization and death for high-risk patients by 30 percent.

## **FDA authorizes Merck pill for high-risk patients**

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

modestly effective and carries possible safety risks, including for pregnant women. Merck's treatment is expected to be available early next month.

- Older people and those who have conditions like obesity, diabetes or heart disease would be eligible to get a prescription for Merck's pills if they become sick from the coronavirus and cannot get treatments like Pfizer's newly authorized pills or monoclonal antibody drugs. Both vaccinated and unvaccinated people will be eligible.
- While the FDA authorized Pfizer's treatment for high-risk COVID patients as young as 12, it said that it was authorizing Merck's drug only for adults because it "may affect bone and cartilage growth."
- Merck's treatment is meant to be taken as 40 pills over five days.

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

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

## **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 J&J vaccine as their primary immunization, compared to 73 million fully immunized with Moderna's and 115 million with the Pfizer shots.
- The Food and Drug Administration on Aug. 23 granted full approval to Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine for people 16 and older, making it the first vaccine to move beyond emergency use status in the United States.

### **Complaints received for health order on face coverings**

Permit Sonoma's Code Enforcement unit has received 324 complaints about public health violations across Sonoma County and its cities regarding the public health order requiring face coverings in workplaces and public settings since it was reinstated in August. No citations have been issued for violations that the county is aware of. A breakdown of complaints as of Dec. 28:

- 74.1 percent of the complaints (231) have been for businesses, not including gyms/fitness centers.
- 21.6 percent of those complaints (65) have been for gyms/fitness centers.
- 94 percent of complaints were about employees and/or customers not wearing masks.
- 3 percent were about potential COVID-19 cases or exposures.
- 55 complaints have been received for the month of December to date.

Code Enforcement receives all complaints made by the public through the Safe707 phone line and email, as well as COVID complaints made via SoCo Report-It. Complaints outside of Code Enforcement's jurisdiction are referred to the appropriate partner agency. All complaints within Code Enforcement's jurisdiction are investigated by a Code Enforcement inspector, who visits the property and provides information on the current public health order. People are welcome to file non-emergency complaints.

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

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

- Sonoma County -- 53 complaints
  - 43 complaints were referred to Code Enforcement
  - 7 complaints were referred to County Health
  - 3 complaints were referred to County Environmental Health
- 93 complaints referred to Santa Rosa
- 62 complaints referred to Petaluma

- 36 complaints referred to Rohnert Park
- 24 complaints referred to Cotati
- 20 complaints referred to the city of Sonoma
- 12 complaints referred to Sebastopol
- 11 complaints referred to Windsor
- 10 complaints referred to Healdsburg
- 3 complaints referred to Cloverdale

## **Supreme Court to hold special hearing on work vaccine mandates**

The Supreme Court said on Dec. 22 that it would hold a special hearing next month to assess the legality of two major Biden administration efforts to address the coronavirus in the workplace. The court said it would move with exceptional speed on the two measures, a vaccine-or-testing mandate aimed at large employers and a vaccination requirement for certain health care workers, setting the cases for argument on Jan. 7.

The more sweeping of the two measures, directed at businesses with 100 or more employees, would affect more than 84 million workers.

- The administration estimated that the measure would cause 22 million people to get vaccinated and prevent 250,000 hospitalizations.
- The requirement for large employers was issued in November by the Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA, and was to take effect Jan. 4.
- Employers are allowed to give their workers the option to be tested weekly instead of getting the vaccine. The rule makes an exception for employees who do not come into close contact with other people, like those who work at home or exclusively outdoors.
- OSHA this month urged employers to start working to get in compliance. OSHA also gave employers some leeway, pushing back full enforcement of the rule until February.

## **Emergency Rental Assistance Program**

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

- 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.

### **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](#).