



# This Month in Public Health

in Seneca County  
January 3, 2022, Edition



## **COVID-19 in January 2022- What's New? What's Not?**

### **NEW Massive Surge in New Cases in Ohio**

On December 9, Ohio's 2-week rate of new cases was 718.5 per 100,000 residents. On Dec 30, the state's 2-week rate was 1,364.7 per 100,000. The Governor shared with health commissioners this morning that Ohio's 2-week rate of new cases is today >1,600 per 100,000 residents, and the trend continues upward. This surge is due to the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus becoming the most prevalent variant across the US. It was first identified in South Africa about a month ago, and its properties make it very successful in quickly transmitting and replicating itself.

Many counties are reporting that their local rate of new cases is doubling or tripling every 3 days. Hospitalizations are at their highest levels since the beginning of the pandemic, with more than 5,900 people in hospitals across Ohio with COVID-19 on January 2, 2022. The Ohio National Guard is in the process of deploying <2,000 Guard members to expand testing and to help fill critical hospital staff roles across the state.

Throughout this pandemic, surges have occurred first in Ohio's largest cities and counties, with rural surges occurring several weeks later. So the next several weeks will probably be very challenging in Seneca County.

### **NEW Omicron Variant**

#### **How easily does Omicron spread?**

The Omicron variant spreads more easily than the original SARS-CoV-2 virus. How easily Omicron spreads compared to Delta remains unknown. CDC expects that anyone with Omicron infection can spread the virus to others, even if they are vaccinated or don't have symptoms.

#### **Will Omicron cause more severe illness?**

More data are needed to know if Omicron infections, and especially reinfections and breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated, cause more severe illness or death than infection with other variants. In Cuyahoga County, ~50% of new cases are currently among individuals who are vaccinated (but not necessarily boosted).

#### **Will vaccines work against Omicron?**

Current vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths due to infection with the Omicron variant. However, breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated are occurring more frequently, especially among people who have not received their booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Data from South Africa and the U.K. shows that 2 doses of an mRNA vaccine (i.e., Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna) is ~35% effective at preventing COVID-19 infection with the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. **With the addition of a booster dose, vaccine effectiveness jumps to 75%. Bottom line? CDC strongly encourages COVID-19 vaccination for everyone 5 and older and boosters for everyone 16 and older.**

#### **Will treatments work against Omicron?**

Scientists are working to determine how well existing treatments for COVID-19 work. Based on the changed genetic make-up of Omicron, some treatments are likely to remain effective while others may be less effective.

### **NEW Isolation Guidance**

*Isolation is what a person does when they have been diagnosed with COVID-19.*

Given what is currently known about COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, CDC just shortened the recommended time for isolation. The change is motivated by science demonstrating that the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after.

<b>If You Test Positive for COVID-19 (Isolate)</b>	
<b>Everyone, regardless of vaccination status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay home for 5 days.</li> <li>• If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your house.</li> <li>• Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.</li> </ul> <p><i>If you have a fever, continue to stay home until your fever resolves.</i></p>

## NEW Quarantine Guidance

Quarantine is what a person does when they've been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

If You Were Exposed to Someone with COVID-19 (Quarantine)	
<p>If you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have been boosted; <b>OR</b></li><li>• Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months; <b>OR</b></li><li>• Completed the primary series of J&amp;J vaccine within the last 2 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wear a mask around others for 10 days.</li><li>• Test on day 5, if possible.</li></ul> <p><i>If you develop symptoms, get a test and stay home until a negative test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.</i></p>
<p>If you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted; <b>OR</b></li><li>• Completed the primary series of J&amp;J over 2 months ago and are not boosted; <b>OR</b></li><li>• Are unvaccinated</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stay home for 5 days. After that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.</li><li>• If you can't quarantine you must wear a mask for 10 days.</li><li>• Test on day 5 if possible.</li></ul> <p><i>If you develop symptoms, get a test and stay home until a negative test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.</i></p>

**What's Still True/Not New?** Prevention is still our best option: get vaccinated, get boosted, wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas of high community transmission (i.e., Seneca County and all of Ohio), and take a test before you gather.



**Vaccines** remain the best public health measure to protect people from COVID-19, slow transmission, and reduce the likelihood of new variants emerging.

- COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death.
- Scientists are currently investigating Omicron, including how protected fully vaccinated people will be against infection, hospitalization, and death.
- **CDC recommends that everyone 5 and older protect themselves from COVID-19 by getting fully vaccinated.**
- **CDC recommends that everyone ages 18 and older should get a booster shot at least 2 months after their initial J&J/Janssen vaccine or 6 months after completing their primary COVID-19 vaccination series of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna.**
- **There are multiple COVID-19 vaccine providers in Seneca County-** Seneca County General Health District; local retail pharmacies like CVS, RiteAid, Kroger's, and Walmart; and medical providers like Tiffin Pediatrics Associates, Tiffin Community Health Center, and Community Health Services in Fostoria. Not all vaccine providers have all types of COVID-19 vaccine, and most require an appointment. To schedule an appointment at the Health District, call (419) 447-3691, ext. 6333. Find out more at <https://gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov/>.

**Masks** offer protection against all variants.

- CDC continues to recommend wearing a mask in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high community transmission (like Seneca County), regardless of vaccination status.
- CDC provides [advice about masks](#) for people who want to learn more about what [type of mask](#) is right for them depending on their circumstances. Wearing a N95, KN95, or a surgical mask with a cloth mask will provide greater protection than a cloth mask by itself.

**Testing** can tell you if you are currently infected with COVID-19.

- Individuals can use CDC's [COVID-19 Viral Testing Tool](#) to help determine what kind of test to seek.
- **Limited supplies of free Abbott BinaxNOW COVID-19 Antigen Home Tests may be available** at Seneca County General Health District, Seneca County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), and Seneca East and Tiffin-Seneca Public Libraries. **It's best to call ahead to make sure tests are available. DO NOT go to an emergency department for testing unless you truly need emergency care (e.g., trouble breathing, persistent chest pain or pressure).**
- Self-tests can be used at home or anywhere, are easy to use, and produce rapid results.
  - If your self-test has a positive result, follow the new isolation guidelines outlined in this newsletter and call your healthcare provider.

