



## Winnebago County

Office of the County Executive

*The Wave of the Future*

### County Executive Jon Doemel Community Statement on Omicron

*Thursday, December 23, 2021*

The Omicron variant is here; we are Covid fatigued. Hospitals have a capacity crisis, and this new strain will be a very quick, but burdensome challenge. We have to be diligent for these next 30 days. We must use testing and early treatment to keep the pressure on our healthcare systems manageable. I am encouraging masking when around others to help slow the spread.

It is still early, yet all signs of the omicron variant are suggesting this strain is less severe. This is good news. All signs are suggesting this variant is far more contagious; this is the issue. Even though fewer people per thousand will need elevated care, the increased numbers will cause a huge strain on our already distressed health care system. If we work together, we can use the omicron variant as the very tool to finally sunset this pandemic.

We must put politics aside. We have to realize the importance of testing, staying home when sick, and early treatment options. Free tests may be delivered to you and requested at [dhs.wisconsin.gov](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov). Vaccination is currently the best tool to keep people out of the hospital. We cannot afford to ignore the existence of Covid. I am urging citizens to get tested at the earliest signs of symptoms. We cannot assume it is just a common cold.

I am calling on everyone to do what you can to mitigate the speed of this spread. Take this seriously. Wash your hands, wear a mask when you are near others, take a Covid test when you have been exposed or are feeling symptomatic, and stay home if you are sick. Please, do not be careless with this virus. I am not asking anyone to cancel Christmas; I am asking you to be mindful of others.

We are still in this together and we can get through this together. We cannot and will not be able to save everyone. We have to acknowledge death has always been a part of life, way before Covid ever existed. We are looking at a 45-day wave. I understand that timelines have been stretched and we have lost credibility with some in these regards. Two weeks to flatten the curve have stretched on for many long months.

I am now calling on us to accept that this is not going away. We must find a way forward. There will be times in the future where we have to show restraint. Whether it be a new strain or something completely different such as flu outbreaks in 2009 or 2018. We will have times where we implore people to wear mask, wash hands and keep social distance. These will be short bursts to keep each other safe.

We simply cannot live at an extreme level of fear forever. If we are always at maximum safety protocols, we will lose compliance when we desperately need them in place. We need a comprehensive strategy going forward with reasonable metrics. We cannot accept a false sense of security, nor can we continue pushing this heightened level of fear.

While we struggle through these next few weeks try to remember that we are all members of this community. While Omicron burns through the population, we may find ourselves on the other side with a legitimate level of herd immunity. None of it will matter if we lose our herd civility. This virus is our foe, not your neighbor. Do what you can. Be mindful. Be cautious. Above all, be nice. Be giving. That is the spirit of the season.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jon Doemel', located at the bottom right of the page.