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Winnebago County COVID-19 (Omicron) Recommendations
Updated 12/23/21

The Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD) issues the following recommendations to serve as guidelines to control the transmission of COVID-19 throughout our communities.

The Omicron variant of COVID-19 is now the dominant variant in the United States. This variant spreads much more easily than previous COVID-19 variants and will become the predominant strain of COVID-19 in Wisconsin if it isn't already. The best protection from Omicron is vaccination, plus a booster, and wearing a mask when recommended.

All residents are strongly advised to:
- Get vaccinated as soon as possible and get your booster as soon as eligible.
- Wear a mask anytime you are indoors and not at home, and when in close proximity to others when outside. Masks should be tight fitting and multi-layered.
- Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or if you have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Use a community testing site if you have a known exposure or have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Use at home tests when gathering with others from outside your household before you get together. Gathering with people outside of your household is not recommended but, if you do, it is recommended that gatherings are kept small and people get tested before gathering. Stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are not feeling well or are in quarantine due to close contact.
- Stay home when ill.

Vaccination is the primary way to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All the available vaccines are very safe and highly effective at preventing severe symptoms due to the illness, and avoiding hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, your family, and your community from the risks of COVID-19. Vaccines are widely available throughout Winnebago County. If you are eligible, get vaccinated. Visit wcvaccine.org for a list of vaccine clinic locations in our area. Employers and organizations are highly encouraged to promote vaccination. For assistance in setting up an on-site vaccination clinic, contact the health department at 920-232-3026 or health@co.winnebago.wi.us.

WCHD recommends following the most recent CDC guidance regardless of vaccination status.
- Wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high transmission. All of Wisconsin is currently a high transmission area.
  - People may choose to mask regardless of the level of transmission, particularly if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised or at increased risk for severe disease, or if someone in their household is unvaccinated. People who are at increased risk for severe disease include older adults and those who have certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, overweight or obesity, and heart conditions.

- Get tested if experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms.](#)
- Get tested 5-7 days after close contact to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days after exposure.
- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, *regardless of vaccination status*, should get tested and isolate until test results are known.
- Isolate for 10 days if you test positive for COVID-19 or if you are exposed and become ill and don't get tested.
- Follow any applicable federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations.
- Follow CDC [travel requirements](#) and [recommendations](#).

These are the settings where everyone, even if fully vaccinated, should continue to wear masks regardless of the transmission level.
- [Healthcare settings](#)
- [K-12 schools](#), including [school buses](#)
- Places where masks are required by local or tribal laws, rules, and regulations, including local businesses and workplaces
- Areas with [substantial to high community transmission (Winnebago County has high transmission)](#)
- Correctional and detention facilities and homeless shelters
- All forms of [public transportation](#) (including planes, buses, [school buses](#), and trains) traveling into, within, or out of the United States and in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations

These are the settings when you don't need to wear a mask.
- Inside your home around your household members
- Outdoors where it is possible to maintain 6 feet of distance from others.
- Outdoor activities that are independent or only with members of your household
- In areas of [low or moderate community transmission](#) when you are [fully vaccinated](#) against COVID-19 and masks are not required by local rules and regulations
- If you have medical or safety reasons that prohibit mask wearing (for example, children under 2 years old and people who cannot safely wear a mask for reasons related to a disability)

Travel Recommendations
- For [international travel](#), starting December 6, all air passengers, regardless of vaccination status, must show a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 1 day before travel to the United States.
- For domestic travel
  - Delay travel until you are fully vaccinated. If you are not fully vaccinated there are [additional recommendations](#) to follow before, during, and after travel.
  - Check your destination's COVID-19 situation before traveling. State, local, and territorial governments may have travel restrictions in place.
  - You are required to wear a mask over your nose and mouth in indoor areas of public transportation (including airplanes) and indoors in U.S. transportation hubs (including airports).
  - Do not travel if you have been exposed to COVID-19, you are sick, or if you test positive for COVID-19.
  - If you are not fully vaccinated and must travel, get tested before and after your trip.
  - For more information, review [CDC travel guidance](#) and [Travel FAQs](#).

Regardless of your vaccination status, masking, distancing, and avoiding crowded indoor environments are the most effective ways to prevent spread and protect yourself. To help you determine the risk level and choose safer activities, use this **[CDC chart](#)**.

For businesses and organizations:
- **Encourage all staff to mask up and consider if a masking policy is necessary**. **To protect your workforce it is highly advised to require masking now and through the Omicron surge.** This applies to both staff and customers (via signage). Please visit CDC guidance page for more information.
- **Encourage vaccination** among your staff. COVID-19 vaccines are effective at protecting you from getting sick. Offering paid time off, flexible scheduling, and incentives for staff to get vaccinated are all ways to increase your staff vaccination rate. Getting the booster when eligible is the best plan for Omicron.
- **Have a plan if an employee is sick or was exposed.** Be familiar with what to do if you have an employee who is sick or exposed to someone with COVID-19.
  - Fully vaccinated people who have come into close contact with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 need to be tested 5-7 days after exposure and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, *regardless of vaccination status*, should get tested and isolate until test results are known.
- **Continue to offer customers and staff flexibility that works for your business.** Earlier in the pandemic, you might have offered your customers new options, like carryout or curbside service. Your staff may have been able to work from home or have a more flexible schedule. Continue to offer customers and staff flexibility that works for your business.
- **Host a vaccination clinic** either for your staff or for the community on your premises. Consider anonymously polling your staff to determine how many are vaccinated. If you are a large employer, this can help you assess vaccination rates among different departments, which can aid in your planning.
- **Retain policies for hygiene, employee illness, and cleaning.** These policies prevent the spread of illnesses like COVID-19, flu, whooping cough, norovirus, and more.
- **Review and implement CDC's sector-specific guidance to reduce risk.** This guidance for your sector may include things like increasing ventilation, specific cleaning procedures, etc.

Resources
- CDC Choosing Safer Activities https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/pdfs/choosingSaferAct.pdf
- DHS Mask Guidance: https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/mask.htm
- DHS Staying Safe in Your Community - https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/community.htm
- Winnebago County Vaccine Information – https://www.wcvaccine.org
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidance What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws: https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws
- OSHA Guidance by Industry: https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/guidance/industry
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation Vaccine Guidance for All Businesses - https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/WEDC_DHS_COVID-19-Vaccine-Guidelines-2.pdf
- For related information for healthcare settings, visit Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination

Please see the Winnebago County Health Department website for the most up-to-date guidance and resources.

Thank you for your commitment to keeping our communities safe. Everyone can play a role in encouraging and helping others to get vaccinated - talking to your family, friends, and neighbors can

make a difference in vaccine acceptance. Your efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19 are greatly appreciated by those who live, work, and play in Winnebago County.