



## Public Health Brief

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# BREAKING NEWS!



The new Omicron variant is predicted to have accounted for 73% of new cases of COVID-19 infection in the US in the week ending December 18<sup>th</sup>, and may account for >90% of cases in some regions.

[Omicron Variant: What You Need to Know | CDC](#)



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Alpine County Health Department, 75-B Diamond Valley Rd., Markleeville, CA 96120

Alpine County Board of Supervisors, Phone: (530) 694-2281

District 1: January Riddle, District 2: Ron Hames, District 3: Irvin Jim,

District 4: Terry Woodrow, District 5: David Griffith

As frightening as this rapid spread may be, we have some tools that we did not have a year ago. As I stated last week, success in controlling this new surge and protecting and preserving our healthcare system depends on all of us utilizing these tools. Everyone talks about the # of cases. More important is the # of available hospital beds, especially in the ICU. And most important – these beds are of no value without a team of professionals available to provide the intensive care needed to save lives. What should you be doing to protect yourself, your family, our community, and our healthcare system? **Pick up these tools and use them!**

### **Vaccination including boosters**

- A year ago, vaccinations became available, and now >500 million doses have been given, with >200 million persons fully vaccinated in the USA, with a good safety record. Good news, but not enough. **More than 1/3 of the US population is not vaccinated.** Those who are not vaccinated have 12.8 times the risk of being hospitalized with COVID-19, and 15.8 times the risk of dying!
- Although Alpine County is doing well, we are still recording 3-4 cases per month. For the last few months, we have been giving first and second doses and boosters of the Moderna vaccine to all interested persons who live or work in Alpine County. Evidence points to the booster providing a robust immune response and is anticipated to provide good protection against the Omicron variant.
- Our nurses administered vaccine to several dozen persons in Woodfords today, and our nurse **Jill Jessen-Smith will be scheduling a day to give vaccine in Bear Valley very soon. Call her at 530-721-7489.**
- **The next scheduled vaccine clinic in Woodfords will be after January 1<sup>st</sup>. Please call 530-694-2146, Option 1, to leave a message and let us know of your interest in a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> dose or booster.**
- If you wish to obtain a vaccine prior to then, please contact your local pharmacy for availability.
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Get-the-Facts-on-Vaccines.aspx>



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## Masking

- A year ago, we did not appreciate how far the COVID-19 virus spreads via the airborne route through small particles suspended in the air for long periods of time. It has become clear that a well-fitting mask provides a significant layer of protection.
- [CDPH requires masks](#) to be worn in **all indoor public settings irrespective of vaccine status** through January 15, 2022, at which point California will make further recommendations as needed in response to the pandemic.
- [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#)
- [Face Coverings Q&A](#)

## Testing, including home testing – Are you going to see Grandma over the holidays?

- If you need to know whether you have coronavirus but don't want to deal with appointment scheduling or wait-times, a self-test can be a convenient solution. But who are self-tests right for? And how do you use them correctly?
- Coronavirus self-tests -- also known as home tests or over-the-counter tests - can be taken at home or anywhere, regardless of your vaccination status or whether you have symptoms and are easy to use for quick results.
- **If you have symptoms or were substantially exposed to someone with Covid-19, you should get the gold standard PCR test. Please contact us at 530-694-2146, Option 1.**
- The at-home antigen self-tests should be used, ideally, when you are asymptomatic and the likelihood of you having Covid-19 is pretty low, but you're using it for assurance purposes.
- Consider using a self-test before joining indoor gatherings with people who don't live with you. This suggestion is **especially important if you're planning on being around unvaccinated children, older adults, immunocompromised people or those at risk of severe disease -- and, of course, if you have Covid-19 symptoms or have been exposed or possibly exposed to someone with Covid-19.**
- **Alpine County Public Health has free home tests (iHealth) available to be picked up by anyone who lives or works in the county. Our office in Woodfords is open M-F 8-12 and 1-5. No appointment necessary. Please note that all**



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## County offices will be closed from Friday December 24<sup>th</sup> through Monday January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Jill Jessen-Smith is the contact in Bear Valley (760-721-7489).

- If you test positive, isolate yourself for at least 10 days, and tell your doctor and any people with whom you've recently had contact. Avoid indoor gatherings and, if you live with others, wear a mask. Please also give us a call at 530-694-2146, Option 1.
- If your result was negative and you're asymptomatic, you might not have an infection -- but that possibility isn't ruled out. Doing "serial tests" can make self-testing more reliable and reduce your risk of spreading coronavirus if infected. This means doing two or more tests over several days with at least 24 hours between tests, with one test as close as possible to the event you want to attend.
- Home tests are not applicable to meet requirements for travel or prior to events. Please contact us for direction on obtaining any needed documentation. (530-694-2146, Option 1)
- The iHealth home test can be used on any individual age 2 years and above. It is recommended that parents perform the nasal swabs for those under 12 years of age.

Note: Even though all County offices will be closed over the holiday beginning this Friday, I will be available to answer all questions regarding vaccinations, masking, and testing. Please leave a message at 530-694-2146, Option 1, and I will return calls at least once a day.

## Wishing all a safe and healthy holiday season!



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