



Public Health Brief

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We Are UNDER SIEGE and UNDER PROTECTED

“No man is an island”, and neither is our rural frontier county. In the first 10 days of 2022, we have seen an explosion of new cases of COVID-19 and are now in the highest risk category of community transmission. We are surrounded by high-risk counties, which is where our visitors come from, where many of our workers live, and where many residents shop and recreate. Cases are occurring among the very young, the elderly, and those with underlying chronic medical conditions. In other words, the most vulnerable among us.

We (our Alpine County community of residents, workers, and visitors) are:

Under Staffed

Some businesses have been forced to close due to staffing issues, and others are threatened. Diamond Valley Elementary School is closed, and fire/EMS and Public Health staff are being stretched.

Under Masked

Any casual check around the county will quickly reveal a disregard for the indoor mandatory masking order currently in place.

Under Tested

We have distributed and conducted over 1,200 tests in the last few weeks. However, the supply chain is broken. Even though both the Governor and the President have promised an abundance of free tests, we only have a few left to serve the public, with shipments uncertain for the foreseeable future. This is key as the Omicron variant is expected to peak in the weeks to come.

Under Vaccinated

Being up-to-date includes a booster which many have not received yet
Eligible children 5-17 years of age – very low uptake
Children <5 years of age not yet eligible



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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

What is happening? (references available on request)

- The Omicron variant is taking over, with 60-90% of new cases being Omicron.
- A new record of 1.35 million COVID-19 cases were reported in the USA on Monday.
- It is predicted that there will be >62,000 deaths from COVID-19 in the next month.
 - California reported >1 million new cases in 17 days – the fastest ever.
 - The unvaccinated are 10.1 times more likely to be hospitalized.
 - The unvaccinated are 16.6 times more likely to die.
- Children are relatively unvaccinated, and hospitalization rates doubled in the last month.
- New cases in Alpine County are at the highest levels seen since this pandemic started.
- At the same time hospital staff levels are down 20-25%, hospitalizations are expected to double in the next month. Hospitals are packed because the sheer number of people getting infected is enormous. EMS and Emergency Departments are stressed to the breaking point.

The good and the bad:

- The risk of being admitted to the hospital or the ICU and on a ventilator with Omicron is about half of what it was with the Delta variant last summer. The risk as compared to the Delta variant is 70% less having to go to the ER, 50% less having to be hospitalized, 50% less having to be in the ICU, and 75% less ending up on a ventilator. However, while Omicron appears to be less severe than Delta, it is still hospitalizing people and it is still killing people
- **People who are up-to-date on vaccination (including booster), although they may still have breakthrough infections, enjoy >90% protection from hospitalization or death!**
- In the older age groups, it is still a nasty disease – one in 5 people in the age group >65 years of age still end up in the hospital. Risk depends on age, vaccination status, other medical conditions, and your economic situation and access to good medical care.

What are the symptoms?

- The vast majority of people infected with Omicron will have a mix of symptoms that resolve relatively quickly and do not require hospitalization, especially those completely vaccinated.
- Many cases look like a common cold, with the top five symptoms being runny nose, headache, fatigue, sneezing, and sore throat.
- Some symptoms are less common than with previous variants: fever, loss of taste and smell, shortness of breath.
 - Some symptoms are more common: GI problems, night sweats, and lower back pain
- Presentation varies, with aches and pains, brain fog, fatigue, and weakness still common.
 - Symptoms come on more quickly, typically 3 days after exposure.
- A newly recognized symptom: new confusion/delirium, a change in mental behavior, especially in the elderly. This is an emergency warning sign, needing medical care immediately. It can present



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as agitation, distress, aggression, or becoming withdrawn, less responsive, or drowsy. It can also signal a variety of different health conditions, all demanding immediate medical attention.

Why not just give up, get exposed, and infected?

- You would have to accept the risk of a serious illness, increasing with your age and other pre-existing health conditions.
- You will run the risk of not finding a bed in the ICU and overloading an already stressed 911, EMS, ER, and hospital system.
 - Better treatments to help those most vulnerable are on the way. Better to wait!
- Getting it now does not guarantee that you will not get it again. People are getting the Omicron variant who have had previous variants.
 - Do you really want to risk having “long-COVID” for years to come?

What is Alpine County doing?

- See accompanying Official Notice of Closure of County Facilities, except for essential services.
 - COVID vaccinations and testing will still be offered.
 - Please call 530-694-2146, Option 1, or 530-694-1011 for direction.

What should you or businesses be doing?

- We would advise postponing all non-essential gatherings and meetings for the rest of the month and convert to a virtual format when possible.
- Upgrade your masking to a medical grade mask – [Masks - Coronavirus COVID-19 Response \(ca.gov\)](#)
 - Consider wearing a mask outdoors when in crowded spaces (lift lines).
- For businesses, limit occupancy in areas that become crowded (restaurants, bars, clubs, gyms, spas, lift lines, etc.)
- Consider closing your operation if the public is non-compliant with Mask Order or guidelines and your staff is or feels unsafe.
 - Consider a vaccine requirement and documentation prior to entering your facility.
 - Consider a vaccine requirement for your staff.
 - **GET VACCINATED AND BOOSTED – VAX TO THE MAX!**
- **DON'T GO TO WORK OR OUT IN PUBLIC IF YOU ARE SICK – SEND ANY WORKERS HOME WHO SHOW UP SICK! GET TESTED!**

[CDC COVID Data Tracker](#)

[COVID19.CA.GOV](#)

[Alert Center • Alpine County, CA • CivicEngage \(alpinecountyca.gov\)](#)



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