

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATES & GUIDANCE



LATEST UPDATE – DECEMBER 22, 2021

The holidays are upon us and with the Omicron variant now spreading through the country, it looks like we're facing another year of COVID-19 not going away. While Omicron appears to spread faster and easier than previous variants, its symptoms appear to be less severe. However, over 1,000 people per day are still dying from COVID-19 infections in the United States, mostly from the Delta variant, which has not gone away. With holiday parties and gatherings now in full swing and people letting their guard down, cases are increasing quickly. We are already seeing evidence of that here at the WHA with an alarming number of residents being exposed to or testing positive for COVID in recent weeks, particularly in our family sites.

In an interview with ABC News on Wednesday, December 8th, UMass Memorial Health Care President and CEO Dr. Eric Dickson told reporters that **"we, right now, have more patients in the hospital, overall, than we have had at either of the two peaks previously. You come in one day and you say this is the worst we've ever seen it and you come back the next day and it's even worse."** According to Dickson, many of the hospitals in the UMass Memorial health care system are currently at-capacity. At UMass Memorial Medical Center in Worcester, all 450 beds, which are typically available, are full.

In Boston, Mayor Michelle Wu has rolled out an aggressive response to rising cases. Beginning Jan. 15, people aged 12 and up will have to present proof of at least one vaccination dose for access to gyms, restaurants, entertainment venues, and museums in Boston. Worcester isn't likely to be far behind. Every reputable public health professional has confirmed that the best way to stop the spread of the virus is vaccination. Mutations and new variants are emerging because the virus is finding unvaccinated people to infect and to mutate through. This is science. [Trust the facts, get the vax.](#)

FREE HOME TESTING KITS FOR RESIDENTS!

The WHA has received 2,000 free, at-home COVID-19 test kits from the City of Worcester for distribution to residents. Kits have been distributed at a number of sites and residents have been notified via robocall. **Supply is limited and first-come, first-serve.** If you would like a kit, please contact Resident Services at 508-635-3306 or your property management office to check availability.

STAY SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

WEAR YOUR
MASK



SOCIAL
DISTANCE



WASH YOUR
HANDS



GET
VACCINATED



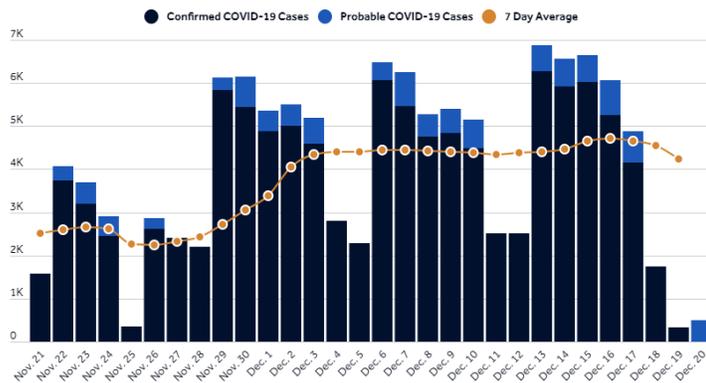
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THE FACTS

In Massachusetts, there have been 947,625 total confirmed cases of COVID-19. Of those, 100,399 are “breakthrough” cases (meaning the infected person was vaccinated). The remaining 847,226 were unvaccinated.

The CDC has reported that the Omicron variant has accounted for 73% of new infections last week, nearly a six-fold increase in Omicron's share of U.S. infections in just seven days.



TIPS FOR SAFE HOLIDAYS

- **Get vaccinated!** Children and adults age 5 and up should get a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Gathering with family outside of your immediate household? **Get tested before you get together!**
- **Feeling ill? Stay home!** Even if it's just a cold or flu, you could put your loved ones at risk.
- **Wash your hands frequently**, particularly before preparing, serving, or eating food.
- **Don't touch your face!** The virus enters through your nose, mouth, or eyes. Keep your hands away.
- **Wear a mask** when in public places or around those who are immune-compromised.

GET BOOSTED!

If it's been six months since you got the second COVID vaccine dose and you're over the age of 16, it's time to book in for your booster shot. This will provide additional protection against COVID, including the Omicron variant.

In Israel, people who received a booster dose (five or more months after completing vaccination) had infection rates ten times lower than in people who had only received the initial two-dose course.

Pfizer has said that while two doses may not be protective enough to prevent Omicron infection, lab tests showed a booster increased by 25-fold people's levels of virus-fighting antibodies. For Moderna, the booster increased those antibody levels 37-fold.

The CDC has said the risk of infection is 8x higher in the unvaccinated than the vaccinated, and the risk of hospitalization or death is 25x higher.

So what are you still waiting for? [Get boosted today!](#)

RESOURCES

- **Need a vaccine or booster?** Click here: <https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/>.
- **Need a COVID test?** Click here: <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-testing>.
- **Need information?** Call the City of Worcester COVID-19 hotline at 508-799-1019, open Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Albanian.
- **Infected or exposed?** Call your Property Manager or Resident Services at 508-635-3306 for resources to help you quarantine safely.
- **Other resources:** Text WHACOVID to 67076 for text alerts or visit our website: <http://www.worcesterha.org/covid19.html>.