

# Talking Points: Omicron, testing, isolation and quarantine, and booster updates

January 11, 2022

## Omicron cases are skyrocketing

- The spread of the very contagious Omicron variant has made the number of cases of COVID-19 in King County dramatically jump to record-breaking numbers. King County currently has about 10 times the number of cases that we had in early December.
- The majority of COVID cases, and the vast majority of hospitalizations and deaths, continue to be among people who are unvaccinated.
- An increasing number of fully vaccinated people are getting milder infections, but the vaccine still works well for what's most important: preventing serious illness for most people.

## Everyone ages 12 and older should get a booster

- Protection against all variants is strongest for people who have had a booster shot.
- Everyone ages 12 and older should get a booster dose:
  - 5 months after the second dose of Pfizer or Moderna (note: ages 12-17 can only get Pfizer)
  - 2 months after one dose of J&J
- [The Pfizer or Moderna vaccines are recommended](#) over J&J for both initial and booster vaccinations.

## Need multiple layers of protection against Omicron

- With Omicron, even vaccinated and boosted people can become infected and spread the infection to others, so we can't rely on vaccination alone when Omicron is spreading so widely.
- We need to use the same multiple layers of protection we've used in the past:
  - Stay up to date with vaccination and boosters
  - Limit indoor activities with others
  - Avoid crowded and poorly ventilated indoor spaces
  - Wear high-quality, well-fitting masks
  - Keep air flowing in indoor spaces (keep a window open or use an air purifier)
  - Stay away from others if you are feeling sick or if you aren't up-to-date on your vaccinations

## New 5-day isolation guidance

- Isolation means staying away from others when you have an infection that can spread easily.
- If you test positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms but can't get tested, take these steps:
  - Stay at home way from others for at least 5 days.
  - Wear a mask when around anyone in the home.
  - Increase air flow in the home (open windows or use an air purifier, if possible)
  - At the end of 5 days, you can leave home if:
    - your symptoms are going away, and
    - you haven't had a fever for 24 hours without taking Tylenol or other medicines that reduce fever, and
    - you feel OK.

But you must wear a mask when you're around others for another 5 days. You should also avoid contact with people who are at risk for severe COVID illness, like older adults and people with medical conditions.

### What to do if you are exposed

- **If you have stayed up to date with your vaccinations** (including getting booster shots for people 18 and older): pay attention to any possible symptoms. Be extra cautious and limit being around other people to the extent possible. When you are at work, school, or any public place, wear the highest quality, best-fitting mask you can. If you get symptoms, it's best to assume you have COVID-19. Isolate away from others for at least 5 days.
- **If you aren't up-to-date on your vaccinations:** Anyone in the following groups who is exposed should quarantine (stay in your home):
  - Unvaccinated people or adults who haven't had a booster shot yet
  - People under 18 years who haven't completed their initial vaccinations (2 shots of Pfizer)

**Quarantine** away from others for at least five days and wear a good quality/well-fitting mask when around others at home. Then, get tested.

Additional guidance is on the CDC's Isolation and Quarantine [website](#).

### Testing

- With very high case rates, test sites throughout the county are experiencing extremely high demand.
- Public Health has been working to procure rapid in-home tests from as many avenues as possible and King County has ordered 700,000 rapid tests directly from manufacturers.
- The first 100K have arrived and King County will start distributing the first shipment to long-term care facilities, EMS, healthcare facilities, with urgent needs, correctional facilities, and other high-risk congregate settings.
- King County will also distribute rapid tests to community organizations in areas of greatest need, including shelters and senior centers.
- Community health centers and community testing sites will also receive rapid tests.
- Until there is more supply, Public Health has some tips for testing in this moment: [Can't get a test right now? Here's what to do – PUBLIC HEALTH INSIDER](#)