



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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SECRETARY

NCDHHS Secretarial Advisory

North Carolinians should act now to protect themselves and their families and friends
(December 20, 2021)

COVID-19 cases are currently rising in North Carolina due to the Delta variant. The highly contagious variant, Omicron, is beginning to spread rapidly and is expected to cause the highest rates of COVID-19 infections of the pandemic in the coming weeks. The Omicron variant is two to three times as contagious as the Delta variant, making it four to six times as contagious as the original COVID-19 virus.

With the holidays approaching and people gathering, it is **critical and urgent to act now** to protect yourselves and your family and friends. Vaccinating and boosting against COVID-19 remain the most effective ways for people to protect themselves from serious illness, hospitalization and death. Early evidence shows that boosters provide a significant level of protection against Omicron.

This Winter and Holiday Season, Everyone Should:

- ✓ **Vaccinate and Boost:** Get vaccinated now, including a [COVID-19 booster](#) as soon as you are eligible. This is particularly critical for those over age 65, those with underlying medical conditions and healthcare workers. The Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines are the best choice for most people. Layer protection by getting a flu shot.
- ✓ **Test:** Get a COVID-19 test before joining indoor gatherings with others who are not in your household and before and after traveling, regardless of your vaccine status. Get tested if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- ✓ **Mask:** Wear a face covering indoors in public, even if you are vaccinated. If possible, wear a medical grade mask for more protection (e.g., surgical mask, procedural mask, KN95, N95).

Holiday Travel

- Wear a mask while traveling. If possible, wear a medical grade mask.
- Get tested 1-2 days before and 3-5 days after traveling, and be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, including boosters, and against flu.
- Do not travel if you are not fully vaccinated and boosted. If you do travel and are not fully vaccinated and boosted, in addition to testing, stay home and self-quarantine for a full **7 days** after travel, even **if you test negative**.
- Follow the CDC's guidance for [travel during COVID-19](#) and NCDHHS' guidance for [public transportation](#).

Gathering During the Holidays

- Require guests and family members to be vaccinated and boosted if eligible before the event.
- Get tested 1-2 days before joining indoor gatherings with others who are not in your household.
- Guests over 2 years old who are not fully vaccinated should wear a mask and maintain physical distance from others, especially when they are indoors. If possible, wear a medical grade mask.
- Keep gatherings small and host gathering outdoors, when possible.
- If gathering indoors, use a space that is large enough to allow for physical distancing. Increase circulation of outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Follow CDC guidance on [Improving Ventilation in Your Home](#).
- If you are sick or have symptoms, do not host or attend a gathering. Get tested and seek treatment. More information on treatment is available at <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/treatment>.

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