

COVID-19 BRIEFING

Updates on COVID-19 in Idaho



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

December 20, 2021

Welcome to the Department of Health and Welfare's monthly briefing on the department's latest news, communications activities, and resources for the COVID-19 pandemic.

New sections are marked "**NEW**," and all other sections are up to date as of the time of publishing.



IDAHO DEACTIVATES CRISIS STANDARDS OF CARE IN NORTHERN IDAHO, CONTINUES TO MONITOR OMICRON

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) has deactivated [Crisis Standards of Care](#) (CSC) in the Panhandle Health District in accordance with IDAPA 16.02.09 – Crisis Standards of Care For Healthcare Entities. While the number of COVID-19 patients remains high and continues to stress healthcare systems, the surge is currently no longer exceeding the healthcare resources available.

"While this is good news for Idaho, we're still watching the Omicron variant very closely because this is a precarious time," said DHW Director Dave Jeppesen. "Omicron seems to spread more easily between people, and we all need to keep taking precautions against COVID-19 by getting vaccinated or getting a booster dose, wearing masks in crowded areas, physically distancing from others, washing our hands frequently, and staying home if we're sick to avoid overwhelming our healthcare systems again."

Crisis standards of care was deactivated in the rest of the state on Nov. 22. However, healthcare systems statewide are generally using contingency operations. This means they remain stressed with an unusually high number of patients. It will be some time before healthcare systems return to full normal operations. It also will take time for the healthcare systems to work through the many delayed surgeries and other medical treatments.

[Read the full press release.](#)



OMICRON CASE OF COVID-19 DETECTED IN IDAHO

Idaho has detected one case of COVID-19 with the Omicron variant in a resident of the four-county area covered by the Central District Health. This person had recently traveled out of state, and had mild symptoms, likely because they were vaccinated.

Health officials in Idaho and nationally are studying Omicron to determine how much of a threat it is. As our understanding of the Omicron variant continues to grow, we will share updated information so Idahoans can protect themselves and their loved ones.

Even as DHW monitors Omicron, the Delta variant continues to cause nearly all the current COVID-19 cases in Idaho.

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NEW
INFORMATION

OMICRON CASE OF COVID-19 DETECTED IN IDAHO

(...Continued)

To keep our state safe, DHW strongly recommends Idahoans get vaccinated or a booster if appropriate, wear a mask indoors and crowded places, keep physical distance from others, and wash hands often.

More information about variants is on the Laboratory Testing page of the [Idaho COVID-19 Dashboard](#).



NEW
INFORMATION

CDC EXPANDS BOOSTER RECOMMENDATIONS

With the onset of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, the CDC now recommends that everyone ages 18 and older should get a booster shot. Those who got the Pfizer-BioNTech or the Moderna series, should wait at least six months. Those who got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine should wait at least two months.

A booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is also strongly encouraged for 16- and 17-year-olds who got the two-dose series at least six months ago.

Boosters are available at pharmacies, clinics, and healthcare providers statewide. They are not available to the public at hospitals. Use the [Vaccine Finder](#) to find locations, the vaccine brands available, and walk-in or appointment details. Neither proof of eligibility nor a prescription is required, and all doses of the COVID-19 vaccine are free of charge to the patient.

The CDC's final recommendations for boosters are available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html>

NEW
INFORMATION

UPDATE ON COVID-19 IN LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

Residents of long-term care facilities have been severely impacted during the pandemic. A significant number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths have been among residents in long-term care facilities.

Idaho passed a grim milestone on Dec. 3 with the report of 1,000 COVID-19-related deaths of long-term care facilities residents. As of Dec. 13, there have been 1,007 COVID-19-related deaths of long-term care facilities residents in Idaho.

The state has about 400 long-term care facilities, which include skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, and intermediate care facilities. They have about 17,000 licensed beds.

As of Dec. 17, there were 5,509 reported people (2,795 [51 percent] residents and 2,714 [49 percent] staff) associated with 100 residential

care settings under investigation with at least one COVID-19 case, including 473 deaths (from 82 facilities).

Overall, there have been 351 outbreaks/clusters (251 resolved) with 12,346 total cases: 6,409 residents, 5,937 staff, and 1,010 deaths. Eighteen of the 251 resolved outbreaks had only one positive resident or staff member and there was no further spread in the facility.

The following percentage of facilities have open outbreaks statewide: assisted living – 23 percent, skilled nursing – 45 percent, intermediate care facilities for intellectually disabled (ICF/ID) – 7 percent, all facility types – 25.7 percent.

DHW publishes a weekly summary of COVID-19 cases and deaths in long-term care facilities each Friday at <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/ltc/>.

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NEW
INFORMATION

DHW PROVIDES ACCURATE INFORMATION EVERY DAY TO HELP COMBAT COVID-19 MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

One of the issues that all government and healthcare organizations face during the pandemic is the abundance of false and misleading information available on social media and other communications channels.

DHW remains focused on delivering accurate and up-to-date information daily through the following channels:

- Social media - [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#)
- [DHW Voice blog](#) (new posts on Tuesdays and Fridays)
- [Weekly COVID-19 media briefings](#)
- [Coronavirus website](#) and [DHW website](#)
- Daily responses to information requests from the public and the media
- Public Service Announcements

At DHW, we follow up on misinformation and disinformation by sharing accurate and up-to-date information in our blog posts and other channels. Below are some of the topics we addressed due to questions raised on social media.

How long do the antibodies protect you from COVID-19?

Nobody knows if there is a certain level of antibody, or certain types of antibodies (such as neutralizing antibodies) that can predict protection, although antibody levels are used in clinical trials as a way to estimate protection from the vaccines. Antibody levels indicate some immune response to the vaccine. Some studies suggest that at least for the same variant, protection after infection may last for months, but it's not certain. Some people who get COVID-19 do get it again even after developing antibodies, so protection is not guaranteed.

That's why we encourage all Idahoans to consider getting vaccinated and boosted. It's the best protection we have against serious illness and death.

How soon you can get the vaccine after you have been diagnosed with COVID-19?

People with COVID-19 who have symptoms should wait to be vaccinated until they have recovered from their illness and have met the [criteria](#) for coming out of isolation; those without symptoms should also wait until they [meet the criteria](#) before getting vaccinated. This guidance also applies to people who get COVID-19 before getting their second dose of vaccine.

People who have had a COVID-19 exposure should not get vaccinated until their quarantine period has ended to avoid possibly exposing healthcare workers and others during the vaccination visit. This recommendation also applies to people with a known COVID-19 exposure who have received their first dose of an mRNA vaccine but not their second.

Anyone who receives monoclonal antibodies for COVID-19 should wait for 90 days before getting vaccinated.



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The [COVID-19 Vaccine Data Dashboard](#) includes data on COVID-19 vaccinations by county, public health district, age group, race, and ethnicity.



Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.



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SCHOOLS

Updated weekly summaries of COVID-19 cases associated with schools are available each Monday on the coronavirus website under the [“Schools” tab](#).



LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

The summary of COVID-19 cases and deaths associated with long-term care facilities in Idaho is published on the coronavirus website on Fridays under the [“Long-Term Care” tab](#).

COVID-19 VACCINATION INFORMATION ONLINE

The [COVID-19 vaccination information web page](#) includes information on when and where to get vaccinated, and what to expect at a vaccine appointment. The [COVID-19 vaccine section](#) on the coronavirus website is updated regularly. The page includes the comprehensive COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ, recordings of DHW’s media briefings, underlying medical conditions that put people at greater risk for COVID-19, and Governor’s actions, among other resources. There is also a link available with resources for COVID-19 vaccine providers.

MEDIA BRIEFINGS

DHW hosts regular briefings for the media about COVID-19 in Idaho. The remote events have included updates from Gov. Little and DHW officials, followed by a question-and answer session with members of the media. The general public can listen in.

For more information about the briefings, visit coronavirus.idaho.gov, and watch the department’s Facebook and Twitter accounts for announcements. Recordings of past media briefings are posted on the coronavirus website under the vaccine tab.



COMMUNICATIONS FORUM

DHW’s Office of Communications, in partnership with the Gov. Brad Little’s communications director, hosts a forum for communications professionals in state agencies, health districts, healthcare agencies and facilities, and stakeholders to discuss COVID-19-related communications efforts and strategies. If you are a communications professional and would like to join the call, send an email to communications@dhw.idaho.gov.