**How to Protect Yourself and Others During the Latest COVID-19 Surge**

The U.S. is currently facing record numbers of new cases of COVID-19, as the Delta and Omicron variants spread rapidly across the nation. For many, the surge in cases has led to an understandable increase in anxiety and fatigue.

We care deeply about you and your well-being, both physical and mental. While we are still learning more about these variants, there are several steps you can take to protect yourselves, your loved ones, and your communities.

* **Get vaccinated.** If you have not already been vaccinated against COVID-19, doing so offers the best source of protection against the disease. The CDC now recommends the Pfizer/Bio-N-Tech (Comirnaty) or Moderna vaccine over the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, as these vaccines have proven more effective in preventing infection, hospitalization, severe illness, and death.
* **If you are eligible, get boosted.** While we continue to learn more about the new variants, the booster appears to offer substantially more protection against both the Delta and Omicron variants of COVID-19.
* **Wear a mask.** The latest variants are more transmissible than earlier variants, so wearing a mask is more important than ever. A properly fitted N95 mask offers the best protection. When in public, wearing two masks, such as a surgical mask under a well-fitting fabric mask, can improve the fit and lower your risk of exposure.
* **Avoid crowds when possible.** The Omicron variant is exceptionally transmissible, so crowded areas put you at a higher risk for COVID-19. This is especially true indoors and in areas with poor ventilation.
* **Wash your hands frequently.** While COVID-19 is primarily spread through the air, practicing proper hand hygiene can still lower your risk of catching or spreading it. Washing your hands often can also protect you from other common viruses such as the flu and RSV, which are circulating at high levels this year.
* **Stay home if you’re sick.** The best way to prevent spreading any illness is by staying home when you’re not feeling well.
* **If you suspect you may have COVID-19, get tested.** Though COVID-19 tests are in limited supply due to the surge in cases, you may be able to find a testing center near you using [this search tool](https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/community-based-testing-sites/index.html) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. You can also contact your organization’s Employee Health Services team for further instructions on how to get tested.

The pandemic has been immensely stressful, especially for health care workers. In addition to caring for your physical health, we encourage you to take advantage of our [mental and emotional well-being resources.](https://mytrinityhealth.sharepoint.com/sites/SO-LiveYourWholeLifeColleagueWellbeing?OR=Teams-HL&CT=1629725954379) These include access to individual counseling sessions, virtual support groups, helpful articles, and more.

Thank you for all you do to care for our patients. You truly are a “compassionate and healing presence in our communities,” and your efforts have made all the difference for so many people.