



# EPI Update for Friday, December 31, 2021

**Office of the Public Health Medical Director  
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)  
Bureau of HIV, STD, and Hepatitis**

## **Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)**

**Items for this week's EPI Update include:**

- **CDC shortens recommended COVID-19 isolation and quarantine for the public**
- **Updated CDC guidance for health care workers**
- **Omicron variants continue to be identified in Iowa**

### **CDC shortens recommended COVID-19 isolation and quarantine for the public**

CDC has shortened the recommended time for isolation from 10 days for people with COVID-19 to 5 days, if asymptomatic, followed by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others. The change was motivated by science demonstrating that the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after.

Therefore, people who test positive should isolate for 5 days and, if asymptomatic at that time, may leave isolation if they can continue to mask for 5 days to minimize the risk of infecting others.

CDC also updated the recommended quarantine period for those exposed to COVID-19:

- For people who are unvaccinated or are more than six months out from their second mRNA dose (or more than 2 months after the J&J vaccine) and not yet boosted, CDC recommends quarantine for 5 days followed by strict mask use for an additional 5 days.
- Alternatively, if a 5-day quarantine is not feasible, it is imperative that an exposed person wear a well-fitting mask at all times when around others for 10 days after exposure.
- Individuals who have received their booster shot do not need to quarantine following an exposure, but should wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure.
- For all those exposed, best practice would also include a test for SARS-CoV-2 at day 5 after exposure.
- If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.

For full COVID-19 guidelines in Iowa, visit

<https://wiki.idph.iowa.gov/epimanual/Home/CategoryID/522>.

## **Updated CDC guidance for health care workers**

CDC updated their guidance for isolation and quarantine for health care workers and guidance for contingency and crisis management in the setting of significant healthcare worker shortages. These guidelines apply only to the health care workforce and provide strategies to limit the effects of staff shortages on patient care.

Significant changes include:

- Health care workers with COVID-19 who are asymptomatic can return to work after 7 days with a negative test (isolation can be further reduced if staffing shortages exist).
- Health care workers who have received all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses, including a booster, do not need to quarantine following high-risk exposures.

For more information about updated CDC guidance for health care workers, visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html).

## **Omicron variants continue to be identified in Iowa**

A total of 41 Omicron variants have been identified in Iowa, and additional confirmations are expected. Iowa, like other states, has identified Omicron variants in both international travelers and individuals without a history of travel. Iowans should expect that community spread of the Omicron variant is occurring.

Delta currently remains the dominant variant strain among sequenced specimens in Iowa. Omicron variants account for 6.4% of specimens sequenced in December.

For additional information about Omicron, visit:

[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/omicron-variant.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/omicron-variant.html).

**Have a healthy and happy week!**

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