

# Dutchess County Department of Behavioral & Community Health

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## Public Health Alert

December 29, 2021

### COVID-19 Transmission Rates on the Rise Following Holiday Season; Masks, Vaccinations, Boosters, and Other Mitigations Recommended

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified a national trend of increasing circulation of the Delta COVID-19 variant, and of Omicron, a new highly concerning variant identified in New York in December 2021 that is spreading at an exponential rate.

Since Thanksgiving, the **seven-day average case rate has almost tripled, and hospitalizations have more than doubled, in Dutchess County and the Mid-Hudson region.** While the percentage of New Yorkers fully vaccinated continues to increase, the uptick is not fast enough to completely curb the spread of this highly transmissible virus, particularly among communities with low vaccination coverage. The above findings demonstrate the necessity for increased adherence to multiple prevention strategies.

The Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health (DBCH), in partnership with the Dutchess County Board of Health, supports a multilayered approach to contain COVID-19 to include education and guidance about common sense mitigation measures.

- We strongly urge all Dutchess County residents, businesses, and visitors to **employ all available mitigation strategies to reduce community transmission** including mask wearing, social distancing, vaccinations, boosters, testing, participation in contact tracing, and education to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.
- All persons able to medically tolerate a face covering/mask, regardless of vaccination status, should **wear an appropriate face covering/mask while in any indoor public place.** Businesses and other entities requiring mask-wearing in their establishments have a right to enforce this requirement.
- **Wear high-quality masks**, such as surgical masks or KN95, whenever possible. They are more protective than cloth coverings.
- **Get the COVID vaccine** for all household members aged 5 and older. If you are age 16 or older, fully vaccinated and your last dose was at least six months ago (two months if you received the J&J vaccine), **get a booster.** While full vaccination is still great protection against severe disease and hospitalization, boosters are your best protection against becoming infected in the first place. For appointment information, visit [www.DutchessNY.gov/covidvaccine](http://www.DutchessNY.gov/covidvaccine)
- **Get your flu shot.** There is a resurgence of influenza this year, and you will want to keep yourself less vulnerable to COVID, or to severe flu that can also lead to hospitalization or death.
- We strongly urge all Dutchess County residents to **engage in practices that improve their immune systems and overall health, especially this winter.** A healthy diet, adequate sleep, generous hydration, avoidance of tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption, regular exercise, and proper hygiene including frequent handwashing are all important to support immunity. A healthier immune system can help reduce an individual's vulnerability to infection and ability to spread the virus.

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**Dutchess County COVID-19 Hotline**

**(845) 486-3555 or (845) 431-6465 (after hours)**

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