



OMICRON VARIANT: WHAT WE KNOW

- The symptoms of omicron and other seasonal respiratory viruses, including influenza (flu), are similar. Currently, **all these viruses are circulating, and you should stay home when sick.** Only a test can confirm whether you have COVID-19 or the flu, as opposed to the common cold.
- **The omicron variant is more contagious** (transmissible) than any prior variant.
- **The incubation period (from exposure to symptoms) of omicron is 2-3 days.** Because of this, for example, if you were exposed YESTERDAY your test result TODAY may be inaccurate. Tests are more accurate once symptoms have begun.
- **Symptoms of omicron may last 3-7 days.** Some cases may be asymptomatic.
- **Omicron may cause less severe illness.** There is still a significant risk of hospitalization and death, especially for unvaccinated individuals (15 times greater risk of hospitalization).
- **Omicron thrives in the nose and throat**, so symptoms may include sore throat and nasal congestion or runny nose. This may also be why it's more contagious: **lots of virus particles in the airways are easily aerosolized and spread.**
- **High-quality masks** (N95s and KN95s preferred) provide better protection than surgical masks. Cloth masks do not provide good protection against omicron (but it's better to wear a cloth mask than no mask).
- **Treatment options are limited.** Most of the monoclonal antibodies that worked against other variants have not worked for omicron. There are other antivirals coming, but while they may help prevent severe infection, **they don't lessen transmission.**
- **If you are exposed** (within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for over 15 minutes in a 24hr period) **and you are boosted**, you are not required to quarantine, but must wear a mask and monitor for symptoms for 10 days. **If you are unvaccinated, or vaccinated and eligible for a booster but have not received a booster, you must quarantine for 5 days.** In either case, a NAAT/PCR test is recommended at day 5, or sooner if symptoms develop.
- **If you are COVID-19 positive, isolate for 5 full days with strict mask wearing for the rest of the 10 days** (day 0 is day of symptom onset, or day of positive test if no symptoms). If unable to wear a well-fitting mask, isolate for a **full 10 days.** To end isolation, symptoms, if present, must be improving.
- **If you test positive on a home test, please report your result online at www.DutchessNY.gov/COVIDpositive** and follow quarantine/isolation instructions.



QUARANTINE & ISOLATION GUIDANCE

For individuals who are NOT immunocompromised

QUARANTINE You were in close contact with a person who has COVID-19 and you must stay home.

ISOLATE You tested positive for COVID-19 and must stay home AND away from others in your household, including using separate restrooms, if possible.

