



# Media Release

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## COVID-19 Cases Increasing in Yakima County

**Yakima, WA-** With respiratory illnesses widespread throughout Yakima County, the Yakima Health District is urging community members to utilize preventative measures, including getting a COVID-19 bivalent booster and flu vaccine, to remain safe.

Yakima County is currently seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Recent holidays, gatherings, and related travel have likely contributed to this increase. The case rate in Yakima County from November 15 to December 26 increased by 163%. On November 15, Yakima County reported a 14-day case rate of 54 per 100,000 and on December 26, the 14-day case rate was 142 per 100,000. However, this may be underreported given the availability of at-home test kits.

The COVID-19 hospitalization rate in Yakima County has increased by 233% from a 7-day hospitalization rate of 1.5 per 100,000 on November 15 to a 7-day hospitalization rate of 5.0 per 100,000 on December 26. In the month of December, Yakima County reported seven deaths due to COVID-19. For reference, September, October, and November combined reported 6 deaths due to COVID-19.

Additionally, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in Yakima County is beginning to decrease, however flu cases are still circulating at high levels. Based on RSV tests administered at the Yakima County hospitals, the weekly positivity percentage for the week of December 25-31 was 6.7%. In comparison, about a month ago on November 27-December 3, the weekly positivity percentage was 31.4%. In flu tests administered at the Yakima County hospitals, the weekly positivity percentage for the week of December 25-31 was 23.0% and about a month ago on November 27- December 3, it was 26.6%.

## **Outbreaks**

COVID-19 and flu outbreaks continue to occur in Yakima County. On January 4, there were 15 active COVID-19 outbreaks, 2 flu outbreaks and 1 flu and COVID-19 outbreak. Of the 15 COVID-19 outbreaks, 7 are from nursing homes, 4 are from substance use disorder treatment facilities, 3 are from adult family homes or supported living, and 1 is from an assisted living facility. The 2 flu outbreaks are from assisted living facilities. One nursing home is experiencing both a flu and COVID-19 outbreak.

All COVID-19 and flu outbreaks are significant but are especially concerning when in congregate settings due to how quickly the viruses can spread between individuals who live together. The Yakima Health District continues to work with facilities that have outbreaks to provide education, guidance, and recommendations to slow the spread of COVID-19 and the flu.

## **COVID-19 and Flu Vaccines**

### Flu Vaccine

Everyone six months of age and older is recommended to receive an annual flu vaccine. Young children, pregnant women, [those with underlying health conditions](#), and people age 65 and older are at high risk for flu-related complications. The flu is a highly contagious disease that can cause mild to severe illness. Getting a flu vaccine reduces the chances of getting the flu, and it can be safely given at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine.

### COVID-19 Bivalent Booster

Everyone 6 months and older is eligible to receive a bivalent booster dose. The COVID-19 bivalent boosters provide immunity against the original coronavirus strain and protects against the newer Omicron variants that account for most of the current cases. The recommendations are as follows:

<i>If you got...</i>	<i>Who should get a booster</i>	<i>Which booster to get</i>	<i>When to get a booster</i>
<b>Moderna</b>	People 6 months and older	<b>Children 6 months – 4 years old</b> should receive an updated bivalent dose that is the same brand as their primary series	At least 2 months after completing their last dose (primary series or monovalent booster)
		<b>People 5 years and older</b> should receive an updated bivalent booster dose of Pfizer or Moderna	
		<b>People 18 years and older</b> who have not received a previous booster can also opt to receive a Novavax booster if they cannot or will not receive an updated mRNA booster.	At least 6 months after primary series.
<b>Pfizer</b>	People 5 years and older	<b>Children 5 years</b> old who received Pfizer may only receive an updated Pfizer bivalent booster	At least 2 months after completing their last dose (primary series or monovalent booster)
		<b>People 6 years and older</b> should receive an updated bivalent Pfizer or Moderna booster regardless of their primary series	
		<b>People 18 years and older</b> who have not received a previous booster can also opt to receive a Novavax booster if they cannot or will not receive an updated mRNA booster.	At least 6 months after primary series.
<b>Johnson &amp; Johnson</b>	People 18 years and older	<b>People 18 years and older</b> should receive an updated bivalent Pfizer or Moderna booster	At least 2 months after completing their last dose (primary series or monovalent booster)
		<b>People 18 years and older</b> who have not received a previous booster can also opt to receive a Novavax booster if they cannot or will not receive an updated mRNA booster.	At least 6 months after primary series.
<b>Novavax</b>	People 12 years and older	<b>People 12 years and older</b> should receive an updated bivalent Pfizer or Moderna booster	At least 2 months after completing their primary series
		<b>People 18 years and older</b> who have not received a previous booster can also opt to receive a Novavax booster if they cannot or will not receive an updated mRNA booster.	At least 6 months after primary series.
<i>If you are moderately or severely immunocompromised guidelines will vary.</i>			

Individuals can find a list of upcoming community COVID-19 vaccine clinics and a list of clinics and pharmacies offering COVID-19 vaccines and flu vaccines at [www.YakimaVaccines.org](http://www.YakimaVaccines.org).

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
January 10, 2023	2:30pm-6:00pm	Harrah Elementary / Middle School Library 3240 Fort Rd, Harrah, WA 98933  Flu and COVID-19 vaccines available.
January 25, 2023	2:00pm-4:00pm	Perry Technical Institute 2011 W Washington Ave Yakima, WA 98908  COVID-19 vaccines available.
January 31, 2023	2:00pm-6:00pm	Radio KDNA 121 Sunnyside Ave Granger, WA 98932  COVID-19 vaccines available.
February 28, 2023	2:00pm-6:00pm	Radio KDNA 121 Sunnyside Ave Granger, WA 98932  COVID-19 vaccines available.

## **Testing**

COVID-19 testing is an important public health tool and it continues to be available. If individuals have symptoms or were exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, it is recommended to get tested. People can experience a wide range of symptoms that can appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Possible symptoms include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

If individuals test positive for COVID-19, it is recommended they remain home for at least 5 days and isolate away from others. After ending isolation and when symptoms have improved, it is recommended to wear a mask while around others through day 10.

If individuals are symptomatic and test negative, continue to take precautions to prevent spreading an illness to others, such as staying at home if sick. Other respiratory illnesses, such as flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), are circulating and may have similar symptoms.

Individuals can order free at-home COVID-19 tests through Washington State Department of Health's program every month at [www.SayYesHomeTest.org](http://www.SayYesHomeTest.org). Additionally, the federal government is also allowing individuals to place a one-time order for free at-home COVID-19 tests at [www.COVIDTests.gov](http://www.COVIDTests.gov). Individuals can also get tested at the Yakima Community-based Testing site located at 1211 N 16<sup>th</sup> Ave, Yakima, WA 98902. It is open Tuesday-Saturday from 8:00am-4:30pm. However, the testing site will close on January 28, 2023.

## **Public Health Recommendations**

The Yakima Health District encourages community members to practice public health recommendations to reduce the risk of getting sick.

1. Get the flu vaccine and COVID-19 bivalent booster
2. If individuals are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, get tested
3. Stay home if sick
4. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow
5. Wash hands often
6. Consider wearing a mask in crowded and poorly ventilated areas
7. Do not seek medical care at the Emergency Room (ER) unless symptoms are severe (shortness of breath, fever over 104F, severe muscle pain/weakness, persistent chest pain, dehydration, confusion) and if possible, until after consulting with your primary care provider.

For individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and need support to isolate at home, [Care Connect Washington](#) can help provide food and other necessities. Individuals can call the COVID-19 Information Hotline at 1-800-525-0127 for more information.

**Quote**

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, COVID-19 cases tend to increase in Yakima County following large holiday gatherings. This year the number of confirmed cases continues to rise. No one can predict how many cases will occur or the severity of this illness. However, we expect a continued increase in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. For this reason, we ask community members to assess their own and their family’s risk tolerance and decide what preventative measures to take. Vaccinations, masking, testing before gatherings, and isolating when you have symptoms all help reduce your risk.” -Dr. Neil Barg, Health Officer, Yakima Health District

**Additional Information**

[www.YakimaVaccines.org](#)

[www.YakimaTesting.org](#)

[www.SayYesHomeTest.org](#)

[www.COVIDTests.gov](#)

[Yakima Health District: RSV & Flu Stats](#)

[Washington State Department of Health: Are you at risk for flu?](#)

[Washington State Department of Health: COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Doses Reference Guide for All Ages](#)

[Washington State Department of Health: COVID-19 Vaccine Reference Guide for all who are Immunocompromised](#)

[Washington State Department of Health: Care Connect Washington](#)

[CDC: Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines Including Boosters](#)

[CDC: Similarities and Differences between Flu and COVID-19](#)

[CDC: Symptoms of COVID-19](#)

[CDC: Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19](#)

[CDC: Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\)](#)

[Yakima Valley Memorial: Right care, Right place](#)

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