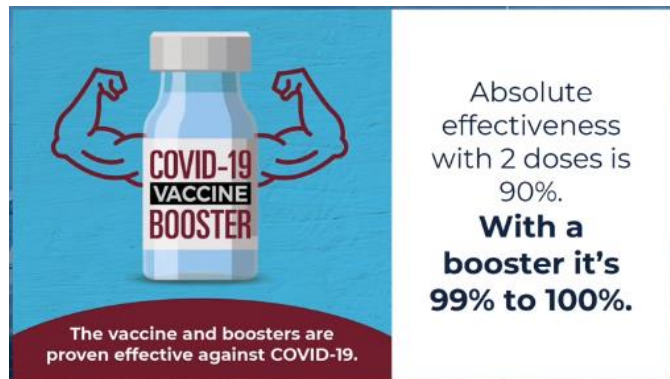


# The DPH Bulletin

From the Delaware Division of Public Health

February 2022



## As COVID-19 hospitalizations decrease, DPH urges booster doses for ages 12+

Delaware seems to be on the downward side of its unnerving January peak of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. As of February 6, 2022, the seven-day average for new positive cases was 501.6, down from 759 on January 12, 2022.

“When you look at our case data, our hospitalizations, and COVID-19-like illness, it shows we are heading down in a good way,” said Division of Public Health Director Dr. Karyl Rattay during Governor John Carney’s February 1, 2022 briefing, posted to [de.gov](https://www.de.gov).

Delawareans who are eligible for vaccine are urged to get it, complete the vaccine series, and get a booster dose. According to [My Healthy Community](https://myhealthycommunity.com), in Delaware during the week of January 24 to January 30, 2022, the unvaccinated and partially vaccinated represented 56 percent of cases, 58 percent of hospitalized cases, and 65 percent of COVID-19 deaths. In the same period, individuals who did not receive a booster dose represented 84 percent of Delaware’s cases, 86 percent of hospitalized cases, and 85 percent of COVID-19 deaths.

“Absolute effectiveness” against COVID-19 is 90 percent with two doses and 99 percent to 100 percent with a booster, Dr. Rattay said. She shared the results of four studies. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, among adults ages 50 to 64, the unvaccinated are 44 times more likely to be hospitalized than their fully vaccinated peers who also got booster doses. According to Moderna, their booster elevated antibodies against the Omicron variant 37 times above the response from completing the primary series; Pfizer says its booster elevated antibodies 25 times higher.



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
Division of Public Health

## Who’s eligible for booster doses

All Delawareans 12 and older are eligible for a booster if:

- You received Pfizer or Moderna as your primary series and it has been five months since you completed it; or
- You received Johnson & Johnson as your primary series, and you are two months past that one dose.

If you are 18 or older, you can choose any of the vaccines as your booster, but if you are 12–17, Pfizer is your only choice for a booster.

If you had COVID-19 and are no longer in quarantine or isolation, you can get your first dose, second dose, or booster dose.

Many primary care providers, health systems, and Federally Qualified Health Centers are administering the vaccine. You can also find vaccine at DPH Standing Vaccine sites or the DPH clinics. Visit [de.gov/getmyvaccine](https://de.gov/getmyvaccine) or [vaccines.gov](https://vaccines.gov) for a location near you. Or text GETVAX for English and VACUNA for Spanish and receive three vaccine sites near you.

## Pediatric vaccine news

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced on February 1, 2022 that its Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee will on February 15 discuss Pfizer-BioNTech’s request for emergency use authorization (EUA) of its COVID-19 vaccine for use in children 6 months through 4 years of age. Follow this news at [www.fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov).

## Isolation and Quarantine

For Isolation and Quarantine guidance and materials, visit [de.gov/quarantine](https://de.gov/quarantine). An infographic is available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. Flyers are also available.



## Governor lifts universal indoor mask mandate effective February 11

On February 7, 2022, Governor John Carney announced he lifted Delaware's universal indoor mask mandate effective at 8:00 a.m. on February 11.

He also temporarily extended the mask requirement in public and private K-12 schools and child care facilities to March 31 at 11:59 p.m. That requirement applies to children kindergarten-age and older.

The temporary extension gives parents time to get their school-age children vaccinated before the expiration of the statewide requirement.

The March 31 date also allows districts and schools time to consider local mask requirements and gives the Division of Public Health and the Department of Education time to work with schools on updates to quarantine and contact tracing guidance.

His actions were through a [revision to the State of Emergency order](#).

The mask mandate remains in effect in state buildings, Long Term Care facilities, and certain medical facilities (hospitals and some physician offices). Businesses and medical providers may choose to keep a mask mandate in place as part of a management decision.

Some individuals may still need to, or prefer to, wear a mask. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides these recommendations:

- Masks should fit snugly over your nose, mouth, and chin.
- Select a mask with layers.



- Choose a mask with a nose wire, a metal strip at the top of the mask. Bend it over your nose to fit close to your face.
- If you can tolerate it, an N95 respirator (non-medical) provides the best protection, though proper fit may be a challenge. A well-fitting disposable mask that you can wear correctly and consistently is better than a poorly fitting respirator.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html>



Computer-aided architectural design of an expanded Delaware Public Health Laboratory on Sunnyside Road in Smyrna. Bernardon is the architect. Artwork from Wohlsen Construction.

## Delaware Public Health Laboratory holds expansion groundbreaking

On January 19, 2022, the Delaware Public Health Laboratory (DPHL) held a groundbreaking for an expansion that will nearly double its size. DPHL is located on Sunnyside Road in Smyrna, on the property of the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services' Hospital for the Chronically Ill.

DPHL is increasing its capacity for routine and outbreak testing to accommodate advanced technical laboratory staff and the infectious disease epidemiology program. Despite space and staffing constraints, DPHL has performed up to 10 percent of COVID-19 testing in Delaware since the pandemic began. The laboratory reached a high of 6,085 COVID-19 tests processed between December 2 and December 8, 2021.

The project involves 24,954 square feet of additions to the east and west sides of the existing 26,165-square-foot facility building. DPHL will gain two emerging infectious disease laboratories, new administrative office areas, an expanded warehouse, and increased mechanical/electrical space. The 40-person Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program will relocate from Dover. Site work also includes 4,386 square feet of renovations in the main building.

As a reference laboratory for the State of Delaware, DPHL supports hospitals and other clinical and environmental laboratories. If a laboratory requires enhanced testing methodology, it can request DPHL's assistance.

Grant awards from State Public Works, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Rescue Plan Act will fund the \$35 million project. Most work is anticipated to be completed by the summer of 2023.

## Prevent heart disease and Alzheimer's disease with a healthy lifestyle

Valentine's Day reminds us to celebrate ourselves and take care of our heart. Heart disease is a leading health concern, particularly among women.

According to the 2020 Delaware Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 4.8 percent of Delaware adults reported having been told they had angina or coronary heart disease. In the same year, 5.5 percent of Delaware adults reported having had a heart attack and survived, and 3.4 percent of Delaware adults reported having a stroke (including "mini" stroke) and survived.

Heart disease covers many conditions and can lead to serious, even fatal, cardiac events such as heart attack and stroke. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), risk factors for heart disease are high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, being overweight or obese, having an unhealthy diet, getting little physical activity, and drinking alcohol excessively.

One way to improve blood pressure control is to check out the Division of Public Health's Healthy Heart Ambassador Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring Program. For more information about this program, visit [www.healthydelaware.org](http://www.healthydelaware.org) or call 302-208-9097 for eligibility requirements and enrollment.

Eating a heart-healthy diet and getting regular physical exercise will help keep your heart strong and lower your risk for heart disease. These same activities can help protect your brain. Some practical steps include:

- Get at least 30 minutes daily of moderate movement.
- Eat heart-healthy, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Reduce salt intake.
- Self-monitor your blood pressure per your health care provider's recommendations.
- Be socially active. Maintain strong social relationships.
- Keep mentally active. Read books, do puzzles, take a class, and learn something new.



For more information, visit the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/infographic/healthy-aging.htm> and the Alzheimer's Association at [alz.org/delval](http://alz.org/delval) or 800-272-3900.

## Did You Know?

More women die from heart disease each year than from any other cause.

**YOU CAN CHANGE THIS!**

Follow [@womenshealth](https://twitter.com/womenshealth) during February to learn how!



## DPH and UD conducting community health assessments through March

The Division of Public Health (DPH) and the University of Delaware's Partnership for Healthy Communities and Epidemiology Program are conducting community health assessments to better understand the concerns and needs of communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and guide future public health interventions.

The assessments are part of Delaware's State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP), which helps to prioritize areas such as chronic disease, maternal and child health, mental health, and substance use disorder, and identify where more work is needed to make Delawareans healthier.

Randomly selected households will receive a postcard in the mail about the voluntary survey, followed by a packet for completion online or by mail. The first set of survey packets was mailed to Kent County households at the end of January.

In late February, teams of students and community volunteers will canvas Kent County neighborhoods to knock on the doors of those selected households who haven't completed the survey by mail or online. Similar assessments will occur for New Castle and Sussex counties over the next two months.

Incentives will be provided for completed surveys.

To learn more about SHIP, visit [www.DelawareSHIP.org](http://www.DelawareSHIP.org). To find out when the survey teams will be coming to your area, visit <https://delawareship.org/delaware-ship-log>.

