

Update: New Covid Guidance released by CDC

CDC as made adjustments in current Covid guidelines shifting away from many behavioral mitigations-including quarantines and social distancing, and using vaccine status as a criteria for interventions. But the guidelines still reinforce key mitigations like ventilation for indoor spaces and wearing masks for public indoor spaces when Covid community levels are high or for people at high risk for severe disease if the community risk is medium. It also repeats its special emphases on addressing people at high risk from severe disease.

At High Risk: A significant study involving 129 research centers, illustrates the impact of the pandemic on those at risk from severe disease. The study found even vaccinated cancer patients who had breakthrough COVID-19 infections remained at high risk for hospitalization and death. The study showed that vaccinated cancer patients (but not yet boosted) who experienced breakthrough COVID-19 infections had a hospitalization rate of 65%, an ICU or mechanical ventilation rate of 19% and a 13% death rate. [The Lifespan Cancer Institute and Brown University were among the participating research centers.]

“These findings come at a time of concerns that immune escape mutants such as the omicron strain may emerge from chronically infected patients with weakened immune systems,” said Dr. Dimitrios Farmakiotis, at Brown’s Warren Alpert Medical School and a coauthor of the study. “Thus, the immunosuppressed and their close contacts should be target groups for therapeutic and preventive interventions, including community-level outreach and educational efforts.”

High COVID-19 mortality rates among fully vaccinated individuals have been reported in other immunocompromised patients, such as organ transplant recipients, prior to the booster utilization—one key reason for the drive to get more people boosted which still hover around only 50% of targets.

Nationally, each day Covid cases have hovered over 100,000, though CDC estimates an additional 300,000 cases are not officially reported. (Meanwhile the US FDA has changed its at-home antigen testing guidance to reduce the risk of missing positive infections.) {In RI 1839 new Covid infections were reported out of 17,941 tests currently submitted.}

Around 36,000 are hospitalized each day. {IN RI 115 hospitalizations are currently reported}

Roughly 500 deaths are announced each day {NY Times 8/22/22} {200,000 Covid deaths have occurred in the US since January; DR T Bedford virologist at Fred Hutchinsen Cancer Research Center estimates another 100,000 will die by the end of the year.}

The spread of the subvariants adds more uncertainty to the trajectory of the pandemic in the US. These highly transmissible variants BA.4 and BA.5 are picking up speed because they’re able to evade the body’s antibody response even more so than other variants, meaning they’re very good at establishing infections in people even if they are vaccinated and have some level of protection.

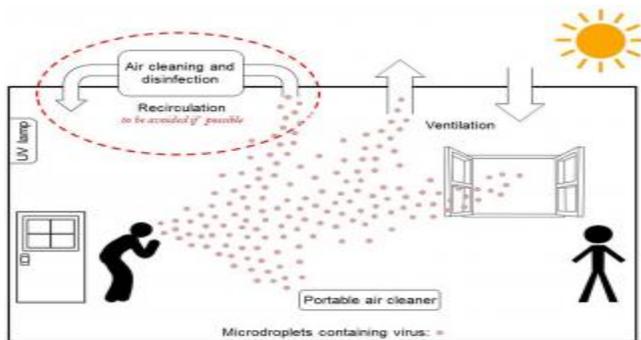
What the dominant spread of these variants threatens, according to some virologists, is the transition to more aggressive and more severe variants as the pool of virus continues to infect and transmit. ‘Pathogens don’t spread or transform without first inhabiting hosts. But with masks, distancing, travel restrictions, and other protective measures almost entirely vanished, we’ve given the virus every opportunity to keep doing this,’ David Martinez, a viral immunologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

“BA.5 has an R0 of 18.6 – which means it is about as transmissible as measles, which is the most transmissible virus most of us know. That means you can come into a room two hours after an infected person was there and still get infected,’ according to Dr Michael Fine former RIDOH director.

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}=layered measures (vaccines, boosters, treatments, effective masks, improving ventilation, testing, and social distancing) have been consistently recommended by experts especially during the first omicron surge. “With pandemic restrictions being lifted, it’s important to take a judicious approach and to realize there’s still a substantial amount of virus circulating. Even if there is a substantial degree of population immunity and if the risk of severe disease is lower, it’s not zero. People who get infected — even if they’re vaccinated and boosted — still can become quite ill.” Dr. Dan Barouch, director of the Center for Virology and Vaccine Research at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

‘There Are Things We Can Do To Slow Down The Spread, Like Substantially Improving Indoor Air Quality And More Widespread Testing During Surges.’ ASHISH JA- WHITE HOUSE COVID-19-RESPONSE COÖRDINATOR.



“ Implementation of multiple prevention strategies helps protect individual persons and communities from sars-cov-2 exposure and reduce risk for medically significant illness and death by reducing risk for infection. Implementation of multiple nonpharmaceutical preventive interventions can complement use of vaccines and therapeutics, especially as covid-19 community levels increase and among persons at high risk for severe illness. CDC Summary of Guidance for Minimizing the Impact of Covid-19 on Individual Persons, Communities, and Health Care Systems — United States, August 2022

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