



Douglas County Public Health

Douglas County Department of Health & Human Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Douglas County to Shift Focus in Pandemic Response Efforts

After nearly two years of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Douglas County Health Department will be shifting focus from individual efforts in contact tracing to a community health approach. Currently, the widespread availability of vaccines, electronic lab reporting of COVID-19 cases, and a growing number of treatment options have given healthcare providers and public health a broader set of tools to mitigate the burden of COVID-19 disease.

More than 1,500 people tested positive by PCR and rapid antigen tests in Douglas County in the past two weeks. The current high volume of COVID-19 cases caused by the Omicron variant has made keeping up with individual contact tracing interviews for every positive case an unrealistic goal. Recognizing local public health constraints, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) now encourages health departments to redirect resources to high-impact public health response activities based on local needs.

Vaccines have been widely available in Douglas County for nearly a year. Approximately 67% of all Douglas County residents have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and 61% have completed the series. According to DHS, unvaccinated people are ten times more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 and are 14 times more likely to die than a vaccinated person. Only about 25% of 5-11 year-olds in Douglas County have had one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

The Douglas County Health Department will be prioritizing vaccination efforts, community testing, education, and outreach to slow the transmission of COVID-19 in the community. Public health will continue to support and partner with schools and employers, particularly in high-risk populations such as long-term care and daycares, providing guidance and resources as we have done for the past two years. While individuals may not be contacted directly, information about current state and CDC guidance will be shared, and local COVID-19 updates will continue.

What you can do:

Continue to follow the CDC's isolation and quarantine guidance. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive, isolate and separate yourself from other people in your home for at least five days from the onset of symptoms (or your test date if you had no symptoms). Watch for new or worsening symptoms seeking medical attention if needed. If your symptoms have improved and you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication, you can end home isolation after five days but should continue to wear a well-fitting mask when around others for an additional five days to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus during that time. Inform your close contacts of their potential exposure.

If you are a close contact to someone with COVID-19, get tested at least five days after exposure, or if you develop symptoms, quarantine if you are not up to date on vaccinations, and wear a well-fitting mask.

Reduce the risk of long-term COVID symptoms, hospitalization, and death by getting vaccinated. Healthcare workers should defer to their employer's COVID-19 policies.

Visit the Douglas County COVID-19 webpage for more information about COVID-19, isolation and quarantine, vaccines, vaccination clinics, and testing locations:

- Douglas County COVID-19 Guidance, Testing, and Vaccination Resources: <https://www.douglascountywi.org/1139/Information-for-Citizens>
- Order free at-home tests: www.covidtests.gov (Results are not managed by public health.)
- Wisconsin Department of Health Services COVID-19: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19>
- **Douglas County Resource Line:** 715-395-7336 Still looking for information? Leave a message, and a public health staff person will respond by phone or email.