



HEALTH ADVISORY

FROM THE HEALTH OFFICER OF SUMMIT COUNTY

WHEREAS, on November 26, 2021, the World Health Organization (“WHO”) declared¹ the new COVID B.1.1.529 variant, named Omicron, a variant of concern due to mutations and preliminary evidence suggests an increased risk of reinfection and spread across the world, including to the United States; and

WHEREAS, the WHO and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have advised all individuals to take measures² to reduce their risk of COVID-19, especially the Delta and Omicron variants, including proven public health and social measures such as wearing well-fitting masks, hand hygiene, physical distancing, improving ventilation of indoor spaces, avoiding crowded spaces, getting vaccinated, and receiving a booster shot; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 infection is transmitted predominately by inhalation of respiratory droplets and studies³ show that masks and face coverings block the release of respiratory droplets into the environment and can also reduce the wearer’s exposure to droplets from others because COVID-19 viral particles spread between people more readily indoors and when people are closer together for longer periods of time indoors; and

WHEREAS, recent evidence⁴ suggests infections with Omicron may be milder and the surge of cases may be short-lived, there is still an opportunity for negative health, economic, and social outcomes associated with the Omicron variant that may be mitigated through increased awareness and actions intended to slow transmission of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on January 3, 2022 67% of eligible Summit County residents have not received the COVID-19 booster and 52% of Summit County residents ages 5-11 are unvaccinated; and

WHEREAS, on December 15, 2021, at the request of the Summit County Health Officer, the Summit County Council extended the emergency declaration as it relates to the COVID-19 public health emergency within the County to address the continuing threat posed by COVID-19 to the health and welfare of County residents, and such declaration and public health emergency continue to be in effect; and

WHEREAS, on December 23, 2021, Summit County experienced a record increase in the number of COVID-19 cases that surpassed previous case counts during any part of the COVID-19 pandemic⁵ response; and

WHEREAS, on January 4, 2022 Summit County experienced the highest single daily COVID-19 case count (216) since the start of the pandemic⁶; and

WHEREAS, Summit County continues to see an unprecedented demand for testing, which places strain on resources; and

WHEREAS, residents who have not been vaccinated are at 5 times greater risk of hospitalization from COVID-19 complications compared to those who are vaccinated; and

WHEREAS, all individuals, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, are at increased risk of infection with the Omicron variant, resulting in isolation due to illness and potential loss of income, productivity, and missed work days or school days; and

WHEREAS, increased COVID-19 transmission is expected with the Omicron variant, risking stable continuation of essential services for all living and visiting Summit County, and straining the local economy during a critical time of the year;

THEREFORE, YOU ARE HEREBY PROVIDED NOTICE THAT:

1. All individuals over the age of two years who can medically tolerate wearing a mask, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status or past COVID-19 infection:
 - Should wear a mask when indoors and in a public setting, including at groceries, building lobbies, offices, stores, school classrooms, and other common or shared spaces where individuals may interact such as restrooms, hallways, elevators, and meeting rooms.
 - Should wear a mask that covers the nose and the mouth and rests snugly above the nose, below the mouth, and on the sides of the face. Higher quality masks, such as KN95s or KF94s, can offer an additional layer of protection.
 - This mask wearing advisory does not apply in cases where an individual is actively performing an activity that cannot be done while wearing a face covering such as sleeping; actively eating or drinking; is practicing or playing a competitive sport or on a professional level; or is performing, including but not limited to playing music, delivering a speech to an audience seated at least six feet away, and acting in a theater.
2. All individuals, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status or past COVID-19 infection, should stay home when ill and seek out COVID-19 testing.
3. All individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should follow CDC guidance for isolation.
4. All unvaccinated individuals, including those who are eligible for a booster but have not yet received it, should avoid large gatherings.
5. All individuals who are eligible for vaccination should be vaccinated.
6. All individuals who are eligible for a booster shot and have not had one are advised to receive a booster dose.

References

1. [https://www.who.int/news/item/26-11-2021-classification-of-omicron-\(b.1.1.529\)-sars-cov-2-variant-of-concern](https://www.who.int/news/item/26-11-2021-classification-of-omicron-(b.1.1.529)-sars-cov-2-variant-of-concern)
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/omicron-variant.html>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>
4. https://www.med.hku.hk/en/news/press/20211215-omicron-sars-cov-2-infection?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=press_release
5. <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/12/south-africa-omicron-study-finds-drop-vaccine-protection-fewer-hospitalized>
6. <https://summitcountyhealth.org/dashboard/>