



Distributed via the WV Health Alert Network – December 06, 2021

TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and Other Healthcare Facilities

FROM: Ayne Amjad, MD, MPH, Commissioner and State Health Officer
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health

DATE: December 06, 2021

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: Please distribute to community health providers, hospital-based physicians, infection control preventionists, laboratory directors and other applicable partners.

OTHER RECIPIENTS: Please distribute to association members, staff, etc.

On December 1, 2021, the United States confirmed its first case of the newly identified variant of concern [Omicron \(B.1.1.529\)](#). This variant was first detected in Botswana, South Africa on November 11, 2021 and has been confirmed in at least 38 countries. This new variant has a large number of mutations in portions of the genome that can potentially increase infectivity and transmissibility, confer resistance to certain therapeutics, and reduce neutralization by convalescent and vaccinee sera.

Because little is known to date about Omicron, the Bureau for Public Health is encouraging all healthcare providers to strengthen their communication to all patients regarding recommendation on booster doses for individuals who are ages 18 and older. **All West Virginians ages 18 and older should get a booster shot either when they are 6 months after their initial Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna series or 2 months after their initial Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine.** Studies show after getting vaccinated against COVID-19, protection against the virus and the ability to prevent infection with variants may decrease over time. The recent emergence of the Omicron variant further empathizes the [importance of boosters](#) needed to protect against COVID-19. Early data from South Africa suggest increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant and potential for immune evasion.

Recommendations for Healthcare Providers

- Strongly encourage patients who are not yet vaccinated to get vaccinated as soon as possible and to vaccinate children and teens in their families to prevent the most serious outcomes.
- Strongly encourage all patients ages 18 and older to get a booster shot after their initial series.
- Encourage patients to get a COVID-19 test if they are sick, have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, or have traveled as per CDC [guidelines](#).

To view the CDC Health Advisory #459 on the New SARS-CoV-2 Variant of Concern Identified: Omicron (B.1.1.529) Variant visit: <https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2021/han00459.asp>.

Page 1 of 1

West Virginia Health Advisory Number 185-12-06-2021

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to local health departments and professional associations. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information as appropriate to the target audience.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance. Warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation. May not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation. Unlikely to require immediate action.

For questions about this advisory, contact the Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services (OEPS) at 1-800-423-1271, ext. 1; 304-558-5358, ext. 2; or the 24/7 answering service at 304-342-5151.