

Recent COVID Guidance from the Presbytery of Cincinnati

Elder Lisa Allgood serves as Executive Presbyter for the Presbytery of Cincinnati. However, her first career was as an immunologist. Lisa has provided informed wisdom regarding COVID to mid council leaders in the denomination since the beginning of the pandemic. Recently, she shared this communication with her presbytery. Your leadership in Genesee Valley believes you may find this helpful too!

Facts on the Coronavirus

6 December 2021

CURRENT

- **The good news**
 - **The vaccines work.** A peer-reviewed study just came out this morning, published in the Lancet. The data, gathered from December 8, 2020, through July 4, 2021, show that of more than 1.2 million adults who received a first dose, fewer than 0.5% reported contracting breakthrough infections two weeks or more after getting the jab. Among those who got both shots, fewer than 0.2% experienced a breakthrough infection a week or more after getting their second shot.
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247\(21\)00069-0/fulltext?fbclid=IwAR3cXbFe41uZYKqjESlarmBUoabpw3_w0xT54jRLmnBIRRE9NjrRESextSQ](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247(21)00069-0/fulltext?fbclid=IwAR3cXbFe41uZYKqjESlarmBUoabpw3_w0xT54jRLmnBIRRE9NjrRESextSQ)
And if you don't think vaccines work, go to your local cemetery and count the number of children there before 1950 and after 1950. We have essentially eradicated most childhood disease through vaccination.
 - **Kids 5-11 can now be vaccinated!**
 - **Masks work.** Another recent study showed that Flu activity, or incidence of flu cases, in November 2020 was approximately 91% lower than in November 2019, according to the data. Flu vaccines were up but we were still under significant masking. Overall we had 1% of the number of hospitalizations for flu nationally in 2020 than in previous years. Yes – masks work.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>
 - **Treatments are being approved.** Merck antiviral product (molnupiravir) and Pfizer (paxlovid) EU approved for use to reduce serious COVID and hospitalizations. Preliminary data says the drug cuts hospitalizations and deaths by 50% in infected individuals. This is **not** a replacement for the vaccine.
- **Now the bad news – becoming dire.**
 - Delta is still raging through the unvaccinated population.
 - 99% of infections in the US are Delta.
 - Delta is still killing more than 1000 people a day in the US.
 - Omicron is beginning to outpace Delta.
 - In South Africa, In October, 80% of all coronavirus samples sequenced in South Africa were from the Delta lineage. Omicron wasn't even part of the mix. In November, 75% of sequenced viruses have been Omicron, with 22% Delta.
 - Omicron has >50 mutations, many of them in the protein spike region, meaning it is not only more infectious, it has a better chance of evading at least some protection from vaccines. Delta had 13 mutations.

- So far those infected have had mild disease, but most are <40 years of age. It also appears those who had previously been infected with COVID, including Delta, can be re-infected with the Omicron variant.
 - Omicron as of this morning is in 16 states in the US and more than 30 countries, and that is likely under-reported.
 - Variant infection continues predominantly in the unvaccinated
 - Unvaccinated are 43 times more likely to be hospitalized and 5x more likely to die than unvaccinated.
 - Deaths from coronavirus jumped 131% from July-August 2021 (CDC)
 - 500% increase in hospitalizations among children June-August 2021 (APA)
 - 27% of hospitalizations are children
 - Maximum exposure time for original virus is only 15 minutes – max exposure time to infection for Delta variant is under 10 seconds. Omicron is likely the same or even worse.
- Li B, Deng A, Li K, et al. Viral Infection and Transmission in a Large Well-Traced Outbreak Caused by the Delta SARS-CoV-2 Variant. medRxiv. 2021 Jul 12;
<https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.07.07.21260122>
- Breakthrough infections are minimal and generally cause minimal disease, although there have been significant breakthrough cases with hospitalizations and deaths in those who were already medically compromised
 - Vaccinated individuals with breakthrough are less likely to transmit disease than unvaccinated, even with the same nasal viral load (antibodies likely “clip” viral mRNA and make it less infectious) Vaccinated infected people carry as much virus as the unvaccinated, but since vaccinated people have antibodies, the antibodies can “clip” the viral mRNA making it both less virulent (causes less disease) and less infectious (less of the virus that is there is able to infect because it’s not “whole”). That’s true primarily for people without a significant underlying medical condition that otherwise might cause them to be more susceptible to the virus, even if “not whole”. Since vaccinated infected people can still be asymptomatic, they can still transmit virus – but they won’t know they even have it and so may not be masking in a world where masks continue to be optional. SO what virus they do transmit can still be infectious, albeit at a less infectious rate.
 - 97% of infections and 99% of hospitalizations and deaths are in the unvaccinated
 - The CDC studied more than 600,000 COVID cases from April through mid-July, when Delta became dominant, and found that unvaccinated people were about four and a half times more likely to get COVID, over 10 times more likely to be hospitalized and 11 times more likely to die from the disease.
 - A CDC report released in August found that unvaccinated people who previously had COVID-19 were about 2.34 times more likely to get re-infected than vaccinated people who've had it.
 - Viral loads in delta-infected patients are 1000 times more than for the original virus
 - 30% of those fully vaccinated who go on to be infected are also asymptomatic; they carry as much virus to transmit as unvaccinated
 - Delta variant is 200x more infectious than the original virus and causes more disease in unvaccinated
 - US is at about 35,000 new cases and 1,200 deaths per day
 - So, for the Love of God:

- If you aren't vaccinated, get vaccinated. These are ridiculously safe and effective vaccines. The longer we have unvaccinated people running around, not only will we continue to have record number of hospitalizations and deaths, we create conditions for serious additional variants to evolve – and eventually one of those will be able to evade the vaccines altogether and we'll be back where we started.
- If you are vaccinated, get the booster. Although antibody titers (levels) decline over time, cellular immunity is still robust (see the breakthrough data above) but – get the booster anyway. There are additional boosters back in clinical testing that will be targeted against delta and other variants. Get those too. Hamilton County will start booster shots 9/20.
- Get your flu shot. Everything you can do to boost your immune system is a good thing.
- Wear masks, whether you're vaccinated or not, whenever you are indoors in a crowd. The Presbytery office requires them.
- **Whatever precautions you had in place this past January – go back to them. Sigh deeply and shoulder the fights you're going to have. Do it anyway – because you love your community of believers and want them ALL to be safe. Ideally everyone in a sanctuary is masked at all times. For everything. VACCINATE and VENTILATE!!**

Status

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that the spread of coronavirus is moving faster than the global vaccine rollout
- Currently WHO reports more than **265.5 million** confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally with more than **5.3 million** reported deaths
 - All countries are involved
 - Current significant spikes in East Asia, South America and Africa
 - In the US, we have more than **50 million** confirmed cases and **808,000** deaths
- Vaccinations
 - 55% of the world population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (39% both doses).
 - 8.1 billion doses have been administered globally, and 34.4 million are now administered each day.
 - Only 6.2% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose.
 - In the US, 70% have received at least 1 dose and 59% are fully vaccinated (ages 5 and up)