

AARP: Calls for nursing homes to require booster shots for residents, staff

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AARP Wisconsin, representing more than 820,000 members age 50 and older in Wisconsin, issued the following statement from its Interim State Director Christina FitzPatrick today regarding the danger of the COVID-19 Omicron variant to nursing home residents, calling for immediate action to get residents and staff vaccinated and boosted:

“As the highly transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19 spreads like wildfire across the country, AARP is calling on nursing homes to require COVID-19 booster shots for residents and staff.

“Alarming new data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the two weeks ending January 16 shows more than 120,000 new staff COVID-19 cases in nursing homes nationwide, including 2,358 here in Wisconsin. That’s as many cases as reported during December 2020, the peak of last winter’s spike.

“Nursing home resident cases are also on the rise, with at least 79,000 new cases nationwide, including 763 in Wisconsin during the same timeframe.

“The COVID-19 virus has demonstrated repeatedly that it is very dynamic. The rapid spread of the Omicron variant over the past weeks poses a significant risk for residents and staff of nursing homes who have not been boosted. For their sake, we must act now and make the delivery of booster shots to nursing home residents and staff our highest priority.

“AARP urges nursing homes to immediately prioritize boosters for both residents

and staff. While still providing protection against severe illness and death, being fully vaccinated without a booster is no longer protecting nursing home residents from contracting COVID-19; the data are clear that a booster is necessary to remain protected.

“The rate of new infections in nursing home residents who have received a booster dose is more than 90 percent lower than the rate among residents who are not fully vaccinated, or who are vaccinated without an additional booster dose, according to [CDC data](#) for the week ending Jan. 9.

“According to the latest data from [AARP’s Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard](#), as of mid-December 58.4 percent of nursing home residents in Wisconsin were fully vaccinated with a booster dose, while only 22.2 percent of direct care staff had received a booster. These numbers reflect a significant increase from mid-November.

“It’s important to note: AARP’s analysis differs from the CDC by providing the percentage of all residents and staff who have received COVID-19 vaccines and boosters as opposed to only the percentage of previously vaccinated residents and staff receiving boosters; reporting as a percentage of those vaccinated could appear to overstate the percentage of the population that is fully protected.

“For those with a spouse, sibling, parent, or other loved one in a nursing home, AARP has developed [10 key questions](#) to ask facilities—including questions about booster shots – to help keep them safe and stay informed.”