

Dept. of Health Services: Updates COVID-19 illness after vaccination page to include data by booster dose status

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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has updated the COVID-19 [Illness After Vaccination](#) webpage to include additional data on people who are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines. People are considered [up to date](#) when they have received all doses in their primary vaccination series and all recommended booster doses. Everyone age 5 and older, who has received their primary vaccination series, is eligible for their booster dose five months after they have been fully vaccinated. In addition, a second booster dose is recommended for adults 50 and older as well as those 12 and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised.

“The COVID-19 vaccines and boosters remain one of the best ways to protect yourself from severe illness, hospitalization, and death due to COVID-19,” said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. “As we see rising cases due to the spread of increasingly infectious variants, it is important that we continue to use all the tools we have available to prevent our hospitals from becoming overwhelmed – that includes getting vaccinated if you have not already done so and staying up to date by getting any recommended additional or booster doses.”

In addition to including data by vaccination and booster dose status, DHS released a new data visualization showing the [rate of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths by vaccination status over time](#). The new graph displays monthly, age-adjusted rates for groups who are unvaccinated, have received only their primary series, and those who have received their primary series and booster. Previously,

the data on this page compared rates of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths between “fully vaccinated” and “not fully vaccinated” groups. DHS has updated the reporting of this data to align with [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) metrics\(link is external\)](#).

In April 2022, Wisconsinites who were up to date with COVID-19 vaccines had a higher age-adjusted rate of cases per 100,000 compared to those who have only completed their primary vaccine series or are unvaccinated. This follows a trend seen in several other states. Wisconsinites who are unvaccinated remain at substantially greater risk of hospitalization and death due to COVID-19 than people who are up to date or have completed their primary series. In April 2022, Wisconsinites who were unvaccinated were hospitalized at a rate at least twice that of those who have been vaccinated. Additionally, Wisconsinites who were unvaccinated died at a rate seven times that of Wisconsinites who had been vaccinated.

“Getting infected with the Omicron variant provides a short-term but strong level of protection against reinfection,” said Traci DeSalvo, Director of the Bureau of Communicable Diseases. “And we saw a lot of unvaccinated people get infected during the Omicron surge earlier this year, which means those people are less likely to get sick now while they still have some level of protection from previous infection, compared to someone who got their booster six or seven months ago. Data are showing that individuals experience waning immunity three to six months after getting vaccinated or receiving a booster dose, yet the vaccines are still providing protection against severe illness and death. This highlights the importance of staying up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines as new doses are recommended.”

Due to the highly transmissible Omicron variant, we can expect to see an increase in the number of fully vaccinated and boosted people who test positive for COVID-19. People who are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines are more likely to be at high risk for getting sick with COVID-19. According to Wisconsin data, 68% of adults older than 65 have received a booster dose compared to only about 20% of those 12-24 years-old. The elderly and immunocompromised are more likely to have coexisting health conditions and be hospitalized due to COVID-19 infection. Several additional factors also affect case rates by vaccination and booster dose status, including:

- Limitations such as higher prevalence of previous infection among the

unvaccinated and non-boosted groups,

- Difficulty in accounting for time since vaccination and waning protection,
- Possible differences in testing practices, such as use and reporting of at-home tests, and
- Possible differences in COVID-19 prevention behaviors by age and vaccination status.

DHS continues to recommend the use of COVID-19 vaccines and boosters to prevent severe illness and death. DHS encourages all Wisconsinites to get a booster dose as soon as they become eligible for maximum protection against COVID-19. COVID-19 therapeutics are also effective at preventing the severity of COVID-19 if you do test positive. As COVID-19 cases remain elevated, DHS recommends that Wisconsinites know their [COVID-19 Community Level](#) and take additional precautions against COVID-19 to protect and save lives. In addition to staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines, DHS urges Wisconsinites to [get tested](#) if you have symptoms or were exposed to someone with COVID-19, stay home if you are [sick or test positive for COVID-19](#), and talk to a health care provider or visit a community clinic to ask about available treatments.

For free, confidential support finding a doctor or health care provider near you, dial 211. For up-to-date information about Wisconsin's COVID-19 response, visit the [DHS COVID-19](#) webpage. We encourage you to follow @DHSWI on [Facebook\(link is external\)](#), [Twitter\(link is external\)](#), or dhs.wi on [Instagram\(link is external\)](#) for more information on COVID-19.