



NEWS RELEASE

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IDPH Announces Distribution of 1 Million Free COVID-19 Rapid Tests for Vulnerable Illinoisans

Public Health Department Urges Illinoisans to Get Fully Vaccinated for Protection from COVID-19 & Flu Before the Holiday Season; Illinois Reports 14,225 New Cases of COVID-19 in Past Week

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced it will be distributing 1 million over-the-counter (OTC) COVID-19 rapid antigen tests to residents in economically disadvantaged zip codes outside the City of Chicago through a partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation’s public charity, RF Catalytic Capital and its Project ACT (Access COVID Tests) program. The announcement comes as the CDC released data showing that 31 counties in Illinois are at an elevated [Community Level for COVID-19](#), with all of those at the Medium level. IDPH is reporting 14,225 new confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Illinois, and 54 deaths since October 28.

“COVID-19 tests remain a critical tool that can help limit the spread of the virus,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “A positive test early in the course of your illness allows you to protect yourself by providing an opportunity to seek treatment earlier, likely reducing severe disease. A positive test also allows you to protect your loved ones and community by knowing when to stay home and not spread the disease to others. We are grateful to the Rockefeller Foundation for partnering with us to make it possible for thousands of families in Illinois to have free access to at-home tests.”

The IDPH Director is also strongly recommending that all Illinoisans protect themselves by getting fully up-to-date with a COVID-19 bivalent booster shot and a flu shot ahead of the winter respiratory virus season and the holidays. Director Vohra recently got both his COVID-19 booster shot and his flu shot at the same time and urges another Illinoisans to do the same.

Through the Project ACT program, IDPH will be distributing one million at-home antigen tests to 200,000 Illinois families in zip codes outside the City of Chicago that are rated high on a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI). Households can find out if they are in an eligible zip code and request one package of five tests on a first-come-first-serve basis at the [Project ACT website](#). The tests will be delivered to the home address.

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Free COVID-19 testing locations are available throughout the state, including in Chicago, and can be found on the IDPH website's [testing locator page](#).

IDPH reported that over the last week, large numbers of Illinoisans are continuing to receive the new bivalent boosters, with an average of more than 25,000 doses of the updated vaccines administered across the state each day.

The CDC authorized two new bivalent booster vaccines on September 1 that include an mRNA component of the original strain to provide an immune response that is broadly protective against COVID-19 and an added mRNA component in common between the omicron variant BA.4 and BA.5 lineages to provide better protection against COVID-19 caused by the omicron variant.

Initially, the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine, Bivalent, was authorized for use as a single booster dose in individuals 18 years of age and older and the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, Bivalent, was authorized for use as a single booster dose in individuals 12 years of age and older. On October 12, the CDC authorized the updated COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech for children ages 5 through 11 years, and from Moderna for children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 years.

The updated boosters are available at pharmacies, hospitals, and other healthcare providers. The best way to locate a vaccine provider near you is to visit www.vaccines.gov and search for bivalent booster availability.

Currently, IDPH is reporting a total of 3,823,905 cases, including 35,289 deaths, in 102 counties in Illinois since the beginning of the pandemic.

As of last night, 1,081 individuals in Illinois were reported to be in the hospital with COVID-19. Of those, 136 patients were in the ICU and 48 patients with COVID-19 were on ventilators. The preliminary seven-day statewide case rate is 112 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 Illinoisans.

In counties at the **Medium Community Level**, persons who are elderly or immunocompromised (at risk of severe outcomes) are advised to wear a mask in indoor public places. They should also get up to date on COVID-19 vaccines or get their bivalent booster, if eligible.

IDPH has been supporting pharmacies and healthcare providers in efforts to increase their inventories of the various FDA-authorized treatments. There are [over 1,200 treatment locations](#) in Illinois - including all the major retail pharmacies. More than 96.7% of the state's population is within a 10-mile radius of one of these locations.

A total of 24,856,184 vaccines have been administered in Illinois. The seven-day rolling average of vaccines administered daily is 27,785 doses, including the bivalent booster and first doses. Since October 28, 194,494 doses were reported administered in Illinois. More than 1.4 million people in Illinois have received the new bivalent booster dose since it was authorized. Of Illinois' total population, more than 78% have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, more than 70% have completed their primary series of COVID-19 vaccines, and of the eligible population, more than 11% have received the bivalent booster dose, according to [data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).



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Data indicates that the risk of hospitalization and severe outcomes from COVID-19 is much higher for unvaccinated people than for those who are up to date on their vaccinations. All data are provisional and are subject to change. Additional information and COVID-19 data can be found at <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19.html>.

Vaccination is the key to ending this pandemic. To find a COVID-19 vaccination location near you, go to www.vaccines.gov. The federal government has established a new website that provides an all-purpose toolkit with information on how to obtain masks, treatment, vaccines and testing resources for all areas of the country at: <https://www.covid.gov/>.

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