



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **IDPH Reports 2 Illinois Counties at an Elevated Community Level for COVID-19**

*IDPH and Department on Aging Strongly Endorse CDC Recommendation for 2<sup>nd</sup> Bivalent Booster for those 65-plus or Immunocompromised*

**CHICAGO** – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced today that the CDC is reporting two counties in the state are at a [Medium Community Level](#) for COVID-19 this week, compared to six a week ago. There are no counties at High Level for the fifth straight week.

IDPH has recorded a total of 4,127,625 cases and 36,735 deaths, in 102 counties in Illinois since the beginning of the pandemic. The department is reporting 5,278 new confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Illinois in the week ending April 9, and 9 deaths.

Both IDPH and the Illinois Department on Aging have endorsed action this week by both the [FDA](#) and the [CDC](#) to simplify their recommendations for COVID-19 vaccinations. The two federal agencies approved an optional additional updated bivalent vaccine dose for adults ages 65 years and older and optional additional doses for people who are immunocompromised. The bivalent booster is designed to offer better protection against newer strains of the virus.

“The FDA and CDC’s decision to approve a second COVID-19 booster this week demonstrates the real risk that this illness continues to pose for specific groups,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “Although Illinois overall continues to have low COVID-19 community levels, the virus is still circulating and causing hospitalizations. Vaccines remain the best tool to prevent serious illness. I encourage those individuals who are over 65 or immunocompromised to speak with their health care provider about the benefits of this additional COVID-19 booster.”

“Every dose of the vaccine provides a shot of protection against the virus that has taken so much from us over the last few years,” said IDoA Director Paula Basta. “If you are eligible for a second updated bivalent booster, strongly consider scheduling it now to keep yourself and your loved ones as protected as possible.”

On April 19, the CDC recommended a second bivalent booster for those who are 65 and older if it has been at least four months since their first bivalent booster. For those who are immunocompromised, they are eligible for a second bivalent booster if it has been at least two months since their first bivalent booster.

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IDPH continues to urge the public to seek treatment quickly if they test positive for COVID-19. Treatment is widely available and IDPH announced recently that SIU Medicine has made it easier to obtain care by offering a new [telehealth test to treat service](#) for COVID-19, in partnership with the department. The service is aimed at providing faster and easier access to treatment for Illinoisans who contract COVID-19. Those who test positive are encouraged to call 217-545-5100 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays to schedule a telehealth appointment to determine if medical treatment is recommended. Appointments will be offered on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Additional options for obtaining tests and treatments can be found at the following [test to treat site](#) or by contacting your provider for [treatment options](#), within 5 days of feeling ill. IDPH is helping Illinoisans stay prepared for any future surge of COVID-19 cases by offering 1 million free COVID-19 rapid antigen tests to Illinois residents in all 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.

Through Project ACT, IDPH is distributing up to one million at-home antigen tests to 200,000 Illinois households. You can 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.

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

The CDC previously 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 recommended 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.

On December 9, the CDC expanded its authorization for bivalent boosters to include children aged 6 months to 5 years. On March 14, the FDA expanded its authorization for bivalent boosters to include children aged 6 months to 4 years who had previously completed their entire Pfizer primary series with the monovalent vaccine. For young children, multiple doses of bivalent vaccine continue to be recommended and will vary by age, vaccine, and which vaccines were previously received.

Under the new recommendations, children 6 months through 5 years of age who are unvaccinated may receive a two-dose series of the Moderna bivalent vaccine (6 months through 5 years of age) OR a three-dose series of the Pfizer-BioNTech bivalent vaccine (6 months through 4 years of age). Children who are 5 years of age may receive two doses of the Moderna bivalent vaccine or a single dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech bivalent vaccine.



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Children 6 months through 5 years of age who have received one, two or three doses of a monovalent COVID-19 vaccine may receive a bivalent vaccine, but the number of doses that they receive will depend on the vaccine and their vaccination history.

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](http://www.vaccines.gov) and search for bivalent booster availability.

As of last night, 558 individuals in Illinois were reported to be in the hospital with COVID-19. Of those, 65 patients were in the ICU and 22 patients with COVID-19 were on ventilators. The preliminary seven-day statewide case rate is 44 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 26,138,116 vaccines have been administered in Illinois as of today. The seven-day rolling average of vaccines administered daily is 2,458 doses, including the bivalent booster and first doses. Since April 14, 17,205 vaccine doses were reported administered in Illinois. Of Illinois' total population, more than 79% have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, more than 71% have completed their primary series of COVID-19 vaccines, and more than 20% have received the bivalent booster dose, according to [data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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](http://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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