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## COVID-19 UPDATES

JANUARY 19, 2023



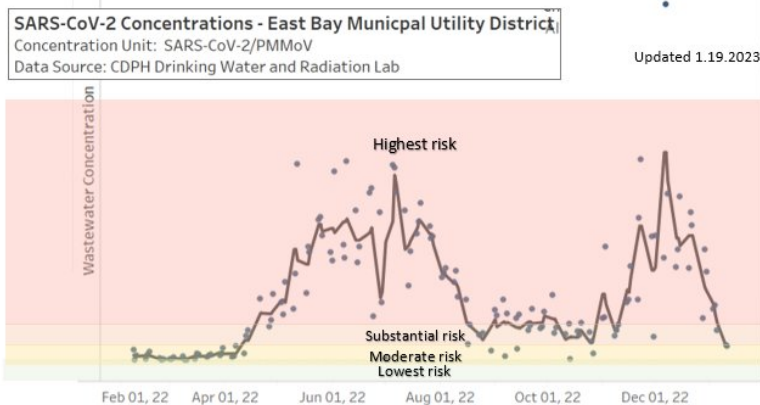
This page includes East Bay COVID viral levels, testing, vaccine, masking, prevention, treatment and other resources, updated monthly. [Please click here to share feedback.](#)

### EAST BAY COVID UPDATES

January 2023

There are still free [COVID vaccines](#), [tests](#) and [treatment](#) in the East Bay, available to everyone regardless of immigration and insurance status.

### VIRUS LEVELS:



COVID, RSV and Influenza trends as of January 19:

- [EBMUD wastewater data](#) shows COVID viral levels peaked in mid-December and has been decreasing for a few weeks. [COVID hospitalizations](#) in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties peaked in early January and have decreased in the past 2 weeks. The new immune-evading BQ and XBB [variants](#) are now widely circulating in the Bay Area, with XBB1.5 increasing in proportion. [California predictions](#) are that levels will decrease into February. Immunity

### COVID-19 Updates and Guide

#### Updates

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#### Variants

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lasts 4–6 months, and bivalent boosters add significant protection against [hospitalization](#) and [symptomatic](#) and [severe infection](#), so [get your updated bivalent booster](#) if you haven't yet.

- **RSV peaked in early December and has decreased since then.**
- **Influenza is still at high levels though started to decrease in January.** Influenza-like illnesses have been at their highest rate in the past 6 years. Hospitalizations in [Alameda and Contra Costa County](#) have started to decrease slightly in January after a rapid rise in December. Influenza levels in the Bay Area are expected to decrease into February. This year's flu vaccine is a good match for circulating flu strains, so [get your flu shot](#) if you haven't gotten it this year.

**REDUCING THE RISK OF COVID, RSV AND FLU**

**GET YOUR BIVALENT BOOSTER AND FLU SHOT! WEAR A MASK FOR ADDED PROTECTION.**

**DURING WINTER AND WHEN VIRUS LEVELS ARE HIGH...**  
(ORANGE OR RED TRANSMISSION LEVELS OR >40% PEAK WASTEWATER LEVELS)

- WEAR A MASK**  
N95, KN95, KF94 or double-mask, especially indoors.
- VENTILATE**  
Gather outdoors. If indoors: open windows & doors, use fans & air filters.
- AVOID CROWDS**  
6' distance
- RAPID TEST**  
before gathering; stay home if positive or sick and tell your provider.

UPDATED 12.2022      LEARN MORE AT [EBGITZ.ORG/COVID](https://ebgitz.org/covid)

To reduce the risk of respiratory illnesses during a time of substantial or high transmission risk, we recommend to:

- Stay home when sick.
- Gather outdoors instead of indoors when possible.
- When indoors, open windows/doors and maximize ventilation, wear masks and test before gathering to prevent transmissions.

[Click here to read our Wastewater FAQs and 🦌 Feces Facts.](#)

## ↳ **VARIANTS:**

- **XBB and BQ subvariants are circulating in the Bay Area:** The [Unidos en Salud variant data](#) from their SF Mission District community testing site shows that there's a growing proportion of the XBB and BQ variants with immune-evading properties. [Western US regional variant data](#) also shows that BQ subvariants are 67% and XBB subvariants are 22% of the viruses sequenced the week ending January 14, with XBB1.5 increasing in proportion.
  - This means a greater risk for reinfections.
  - Boosters, paxlovid, remdesivir and molnupiravir treatment are still effective against the newer variants.
  - [Bebtelovimab](#) treatment is no longer recommended due to XBB and BQ resistance.
- **Boosters increase protection against new variants:** [Recent data](#) show us how immunity against Omicron wanes after 4–6 months

and boosters are crucial to protect us against these new variants. [Vaccine boosters](#) are [effective](#) in reducing the risk of long Covid, severe disease and death, especially for people over 50 and those at higher risk.

- **Stay healthy during this winter** by getting the [updated booster](#), the flu shot, wearing N95/KN95/KF94 [masks](#) and using rapid [tests](#) before gathering and when you have symptoms.

## ↳ VACCINES:

- **Updated bivalent boosters against the omicron variants are now available for children 6 months and over** who've received their last dose or were last infected 2 or more months ago. The FDA [authorized](#) the updated bivalent boosters for children ages 6 months to 4 years on December 8, 2022 with these eligibility criteria:
  - Moderna booster for ages 6 months to 4 years: all children that had the primary series (2 shots) is eligible for the bivalent booster.
  - Pfizer boosters for ages 6 months to 4 years:
    - If your child completed primary series (3 shots), they are **not** eligible.
    - If your child did not complete the primary series (i.e., had 1 or 2 shots only), they **are** eligible for the bivalent booster.

**Most U.S. adults have not yet received an updated (bivalent) COVID-19 booster**

An **updated booster** may reduce your risk of severe COVID-19 by 50% or more\*

**For the best protection, get an updated booster**

\*Vaccine effectiveness varied based on previous vaccination status of the control group and outcome studied  
bit.ly/MMWR\_COVIDVaccination  
DECEMBER 16, 2022

- **Real-world data from US studies published in December show that the bivalent booster provided:**
- **Get a free updated bivalent booster** at [local pharmacies](#), your [medical provider](#), [MyTurn.ca.gov](#), [Vaccines.gov](#), or [county sites](#).
  - **When should I get the booster?** If it's been...
    - <2-3 months since infection/vaccination: Wait and plan to get the booster 3-6 months out.
    - 3-6 months since infection/vaccination: Get the booster soon. If you have an event or trip, get it 2-4 weeks before to optimize protection.
    - 6+ months since infection/vaccination: Get the booster ASAP.

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## ↳ PREVENTION:

- **Masks:** [ACPHD](#) and [CDPH have aligned masking guidance](#) with the [CDC community levels](#).
  - **Masks remain required in California in certain settings:** in health care settings, long-term care facilities, correctional facilities, shelters and indoor transit hubs. They are also required when exposed to or infected with COVID-19.
  - If your goal is to prevent infection and long Covid for yourself and/or people you live with, we recommend following the [wastewater framework above](#) or the [CDC transmission levels](#).
- **Evusheld PrEP is still available but less effective:** XBB, BQ.1.1 and some of the newer [variants](#) are resistant to Evusheld, but it may [still offer some protection](#) against some of the circulating variants, and is currently the only option for people who don't have adequate immune protection from vaccines or have contraindications to vaccines.

## ↳ TEST-AND-TREAT:

- **Each US household can [click here](#) or call 1-800-232-0233 to request another set of 4 free COVID home tests. This round of free tests started December 19, 2022.**
- **[Free COVID clinical consults for CA clinicians:](#)** California health care providers can now call (866) 268-4322 (COVID-CA) to receive free and confidential consultation on COVID-19 testing and treatment from the UCSF National Clinician Consultation Center.
- **Are expired COVID home tests still useful?** If you still get a clear "control" line, the test is likely to still be effective.
- **Contra Costa residents can still get free at-home COVID test kits** from Contra Costa Health (CCH) through a new mail-order program. People can order up to 4 free at-home test kits per household by filling out [this online form](#) or by calling 833-829-2626. There are two tests in each kit. CCH will mail the kits directly to people's homes within approximately 5-7 business days. You must be a Contra Costa County resident to be eligible.
- **COVID test-and-treat:** Paxlovid is still free and widely available! Community members at [risk](#) can get [treatment](#) at the same location and on the same day that you test positive and regardless of insurance or immigration status. Please encourage anyone who tests positive to contact their provider or a [free test-and-treat center](#) ASAP, as they may be able to get treatment.
- **Paxlovid, remdesivir and molnupiravir remain effective** against the newer variants.
- **Paxlovid** was also found to reduce the risk of long COVID by 26% in a large [VA study](#).
- The monoclonal antibody COVID treatment **bebtelovimab is not effective against BQ.1/BQ.1.1**, and the FDA has [withdrawn](#) its authorization.

- **Viral rebound** is common for both treated and untreated people with COVID-19. There is no evidence of resistance to Paxlovid. Treatment still helps reduce viral load and severity. Just make sure to re-isolate.

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## ↳ LATEST COVID RESOURCES

[Click here for more East Bay COVID guidance and resources](#) on how to protect ourselves and our communities.

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## Variants

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