

ABOUT SERVICES HIV COVID-19 MPOX RESOURCES UPDATES EVENTS MEMORIAL GARDEN

Home / COVID-19 / Updates / COVID-19 updates

COVID-19 UPDATES

SEPTEMBER 5, 2023



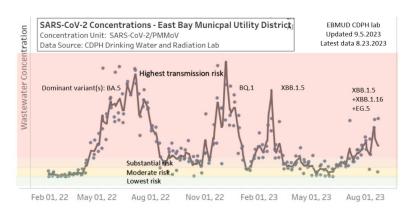
This page includes East Bay COVID viral levels, testing, vaccine, masking, prevention, treatment and other resources, updated monthly. Please click here to share feedback.

LEAST BAY COVID UPDATES

September 2023

There are still free <u>COVID vaccines</u>, <u>tests</u> and <u>treatment</u> in the East Bay, available to everyone in California regardless of immigration and insurance status and continuing after the end of the public health emergency.

Virus levels:



As of September 5, 2023:

East Bay EBMUD wastewater data shows COVID viral concentrations at high transmission risk levels since late July.
 There is early indication our summer surge may have peaked, with a decrease in East Bay wastewater viral levels at the end of August. The top three variants sequenced in the Bay Area during the summer surge have been XBB1.5, EG.5 and XBB1.16.

 Predictions are for East Bay COVID levels to be stable into

COVID-19 Updates and Guide

Updates

- East Bay COVID updates
 - Virus Levels
 - Variants
 - Vaccines
 - Prevention
 - Test-and-Treat
 - End of Emergency
- Latest COVID resources

Variants

Vaccines

Testing

Treatment

Ventilation

Masking

Resources

Archives

September.

- **COVID hospitalizations** in the East Bay increased in August and are predicted to be stable into September.
- Protect yourself and our communities by:
 - o getting updated flu and Covid vaccines,
 - o wearing N95/KN95/KF94 masks,
 - ventilating indoor spaces, and
 - using rapid <u>tests</u> before gathering, when you have symptoms and after exposures.
 - If you get Covid, talk to your provider about getting treatment or get a free virtual Covid visit here (1 (888) 897-1244).

Click here to read our Wastewater FAQs and 👜 Feces Facts.

VARIANTS:

- The top three variants sequenced in the Bay Area during the summer surge have been XBB1.5, EG.5 and XBB1.16.
- The EG.5 ("Eris") variant is increasing in proportion. As of September 5, 2023, Bay Area variant data shows that the new EG.5 variant is increasing in proportion (~25% of variants), while the XBB.1.5 and XBB.1.16 variants have been decreasing. Boosters, paxlovid, remdesivir and molnupiravir treatment are still effective against severe disease from the newer variants.
- Early lab data on the highly mutated BA.2.86 ("Pirola") variant has found it to be less infectious than XBB and while it escapes immunity, it is less than initially feared. This early data suggests that BA.2.86 may cause a wave but not likely a tsunami, as with the emergence of the original Omicron.
- Read more about East Bay variants here.

VACCINES:



 Updated Covid vaccines targeting XBB are anticipated to be available in mid to late September.

- Should I wait for the updated vaccine coming out in late September, or get the bivalent booster available now?
 - For most people, it likely makes sense to wait for the updated XBB vaccine since it is a better match with the circulating variants
 - If you are older and/or at high risk, haven't gotten vaccinated or infected in the past 6 months, and have potential exposures coming up in the next month, talk to your provider about getting the existing bivalent booster now versus waiting for the forthcoming XBB vaccine.

• Vaccination guidelines have been updated:

- Everyone ages 6+ should get at least one updated vaccine dose (Pfizer or Moderna) to be considered up to date.
- People ages 65+ may get a 2nd updated booster dose at least
 4 months after the first one.
- People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised may get additional updated doses at least 2 months after the previous one.
- Get free vaccines at <u>local pharmacies</u>, your <u>medical provider</u>, MyTurn.ca.gov, <u>Vaccines.gov</u>, or <u>county sites</u>.

VACCINE EFFICACY DATA:

- Infection and hospitalization data found that the bivalent booster protected against symptomatic and severe disease from the newest variants, including XBB.1.5.
 - Real-world data published in January show that the bivalent booster provided 48% additional protection against symptomatic XBB/1.5 infection compared to no bivalent booster.
 - CDC hospital data through March 2023 shows that people who
 got the bivalent booster had a 6x lower risk of dying from
 COVID-19 compared to those who didn't get vaccinated and
 1.4x lower risk of dying compared to vaccinated people who
 didn't get the bivalent booster.
- Immunity wanes over time, so boosters provide important protection. Updated COVID vaccine efficacy data from the April 2023 CDC ACIP meeting found:
 - Significant waning of vaccine efficacy by 4 months against hospitalization was seen in all age groups: 68% to 27% efficacy from 2 to 4 months in ages 18-64 (compared to unvaccinated) and 64% to 53% to 39% efficacy from 2 to 4 to 6 months after vaccination for people ages 65+. (Link-Gelles, slide 13)
 - While people who got the bivalent vaccine had lower rates of hospitalization, those who got the monovalent vaccine were further out from the last dose (median of almost a year), which likely also reflects waning over time. (Link-Gelles, slide 13 and CDC vaccine efficacy dashboard)
 - Immunocompromised people ages 18+ had lower overall vaccine efficacy: 30% to 43% to 31% efficacy at 2 to 4 to 6

- months after vaccination. (Link-Gelles, slide 14).
- Waning was also seen in protection against ventilation or death from 76% to 54% from 6 months to 12 months after vaccination. (Link-Gelles, slide 20)
- On April 10, DHHS and the White House <u>announced</u> the launch of "Project NextGen," investing \$5 billing in next generation Covid vaccinations and treatments, including nasal and pan-coronavirus vaccines.

PREVENTION:

- California isolation and quarantine guidelines were updated in August:
 - If you test positive for Covid, isolate for at least 5 days and wear a mask for 10 days.
 - Click for the California COVID-19 Personalized Testing and Isolation Calculator.
 - Talk to your provider about getting treatment or get a free virtual Covid visit here (1 (888) 897-1244).
 - Wear a mask around others for 10 full days after start of symptoms. If you had no symptoms, wear a mask for 10 full days after your positive test. You may remove your mask sooner than Day 10 if you have two negative tests in a row, at least one day apart.
 - You may leave isolation after 5 days if symptoms are gone or improving and have had no fevers for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
 - <u>Click here</u> to download the Alameda County isolation PDF.
 <u>Click here</u> to read more isolation details from Alameda County.
 - If you were exposed and have no symptoms, test immediately and 3-5 days after your last exposure. Wear a mask for 10 days, even at home around others.
- Ventilation: The CDC released new indoor building ventilation standards in May 2023. They recommend aiming for at least 5 air exchanges per hour and using MERV-13 or better filters to reduce transmission of respiratory infections.
- Masks: As of April 3 in California, masks are recommended but not required in indoor high-risk settings, including health care, longterm care, correctional facilities; homeless, emergency and warming and cooling centers. Individual facilities may still choose to make masks required.

TEST-AND-TREAT:



- If you have health insurance in California, you can still get 8 free COVID home tests until November 11, 2023. California insurance companies are also required to cover COVID-related costs through any licensed provider without copays, cost-sharing or prior authorizations until November 11, 2023 (a 6 month extension from the federal end thanks to CA Senate Bill 1473). After November 11, 2023, California insurance companies will still be required to cover in-network COVID-related costs. Click for more info about the end of the public health emergency for California residents.
 - Contra Costa residents can get 4 additional free at-home COVID test kits per household by filling out this online form or by calling 833-829-2626.
 - For people with Medi-Cal, Medicare or private insurance: click here for instructions on how to get free tests through your insurance
 - For in-person tests, contact your primary care clinic or find a testing site in California here.
- Are expired COVID home tests still useful? If you still get a clear "control" line, the test is likely to still be effective.
- 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.
- 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.
- What are current COVID treatment options?
 - Paxlovid, remdesivir and molnupiravir remain effective against the newer variants.
 - 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.
 - Paxlovid expiration dates have been extended to 24 months by the FDA. Check updated expiration dates here.
- How can we prevent long COVID? Aside from wearing masks and preventing infection, the latest data suggests that you can reduce the risk of long COVID if you get infected with:
 - Vaccination with at least 2 doses was associated with a 43% reduction of long COVID in a large systematic review of 41 studies.
 - o Paxlovid treatment was found to reduce the risk of long

- COVID by 26% in a large VA study.
- Metformin (a safe and inexpensive medication usually used for diabetes) taken for 2 weeks during acute COVID infection was found to reduce healthcare utilization for severe COVID and the development of long COVID symptoms by 42% in a randomized control trial.
- o **Ensitrelvir** (a protease inhibitor like Paxlovid) taken once a day for 5 days was compared to placebo in a randomized control trial in people at lower risk (mostly ages 12-69, vaccinated, no medical risk factors for severe disease), and was found to reduce long Covid symptoms by 26-45%, shorten symptoms by a day and reduce time to first negative test. This study was also presented at CROI 2023. Ensitrelvir is already approved for COVID treatment in Japan.
- A "healthy lifestyle" (BMI 18-25, never smoking, exercise, moderate alcohol intake, high quality diet, sleeping 7-9 hours per day) was found in the Nurses' Health Study II cohort (all women, 97% white) to be associated with a lower risk of long COVID. Participants with 5-6 healthy lifestyle factors had 49% lower risk of long COVID.

THE END OF COVID EMERGENCIES:

Free Covid vaccines, testing and treatment will still be covered by insurance and available at pharmacies and community partners for uninsured people after the federal public health emergency ends on May 11 under CA law, the national PREP Act and new Bridge Access Program.

- In April 2023, the Department of Health and Human Services
 (DHHS) announced that some of the PREP Act protections for
 Covid vaccines and treatment distributed by the US through
 pharmacies and community partners will continue, including
 pharmacist-administered free vaccines and treatments and the
 national Covid test-to-treat program. The CA Covid test-to-treat
 program through Sesame care is also still available.
- DHHS also announced that they will partner with pharmacies to provide Covid vaccines and treatments such as Paxlovid free-ofcharge to people without insurance coverage in the Bridge Access Program to be launched this fall.
- People with insurance coverage in California will be protected from out-of-pocket charges for Covid testing, vaccines and treatment from any licensed provider until November 11, 2023. After that, California insurance companies will still be required to cover these costs in-network without out-of-pocket charges. Click for more info about the end of the public health emergency for California residents.

California's COVID state of emergency ended on February 28, 2023.

The end of the state emergency has led to the end of extra pandemicera CalFresh benefits and the closure of some COVID testing and

treatment sites. It may also impact hospitals' ability to address staffing and space shortages as well as some COVID-related paid medical leave policies. Click for more info about the end of the public health emergency for California residents.

The end of the federal emergency on May 11, 2023 will result in:

- The end of continuous Medi-Cal coverage. Medi-Cal recipients will have to manually renew and prove eligibility again.
- The end of *national* requirements for insurance to cover COVID-related costs. A CA law (<u>CA Senate Bill 1473</u>) extends this requirement for 6 more months to November 11, 2023, so insurance coverage of home test kits and COVID-related health care costs in California will extend till then.
- The end of requirements for insurance to cover all telehealth services; coverage will vary by state.

Click to read more about: the end of the California state emergency and the end of the federal emergency.

LATEST COVID RESOURCES

Click here for more East Bay COVID guidance and resources on how to protect ourselves and our communities.

NEXT SECTION:

Variants

← BACK TO UPDATES



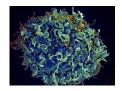


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Home / Updates / HIV updates

HIV UPDATES

SEPTEMBER 5, 2023



This page includes the latest East Bay HIV updates, which include practice-changing studies and developments. Please click here to share feedback.

GET TESTED GET PROTECTED GET TREATMENT RAPID ART SAME-DAY PREP COVID-19 ARCHIVES

SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER

Jump to:

- East Bay HIV updates
- New HIV/STD resources
- New HIV/STD studies

EAST BAY HIV UPDATES



The 2023 updates of the HIV Essentials and Quick Clinical Guides are now available for free download! This collection of updated guides now includes injectables and can also be downloaded as separate documents:

- 2-pager on HIV testing, rapid ART, PEP and PrEP
- 2-pager on HIV health care maintenance

- And more detailed 3-6 page guides and protocols on:
 - HIV testing and disclosure
 - Rapid ART
 - PEP(HIV post-exposure prophylaxis)
 - PrEP (HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis)
 - HIV health care maintenance

Join us for the in-person linkage meeting on HIV Stigma and LGBT Communities on September 21, 9-11 am at the California Endowment in Oakland.

NEW HIV/STD RESOURCES FOR 2023

updated September 2023



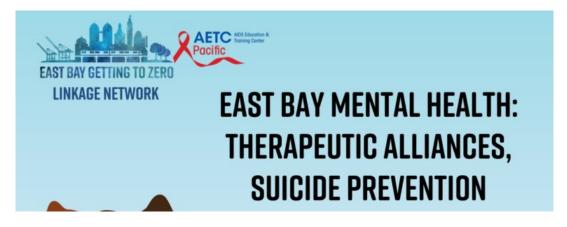
- Check out our <u>Injectables webpage!</u> You can find the latest East Bay resources and updates on injectable HIV medication and PrEP on this page.
- Injectable Sunlenca (lenacapavir, or LEN) is now available on Medi-Cal and ADAP. Sunlenca is a long-acting injectable HIV medication (capsid inhibitor) taken every 6 months for people who have drug-resistance has been a Medi-Cal pharmacy benefit since March 1 and on the CA ADAP formulary starting April 25, 2023. Prior authorization is required for ADAP coverage due to its high cost.
- DoxyPEP for sexy peeps! Our new East Bay doxy-PEP resource guide has been posted and will be kept updated as new data, guidance and resources become available.
- **DO**XYPEP
- The East Bay Rapid ART quick guide has been updated with the latest guidelines and practices. Many thanks to Drs. Doug White and Sunny Lai and the Highland ED and HIV teams for collaborating with us on this guide! GTZ-SF has also recently updated the GTZ-SF Rapid ART guide.
- **Do you have new staff who want HIV training?** Check out our <u>Quick start guide for new HIV staff</u> with free trainings and East Bay HIV resources recommended for case managers, clinicians, nurses, pharmacists and HIV all care team members.
- **Updated national pediatric HIV guidelines** released in April include a shorter course of post-partum AZT prophylaxis (2 weeks instead of 4-6 weeks) for infants born to people living with HIV, and recommendations for shared decision-making around breast/chest-feeding with sustained undetectable viral loads.
- **Updated perinatal HIV data** (here and here; data from 2010-2019) found that the U.S. is approaching the goals set in 2012 for a perinatal HIV transmission rate below 1%, though disparities still persist. Infants born to Black parents have

- higher rates of HIV diagnosis, and infants born to Latinx parents still have HIV transmission rates higher than 1%.
- Alameda County released a health advisory on xylazine ("tranq"), a veterinary sedative detected in combination with fentanyl and other substances in a rising number of overdose deaths, particularly in the northeastern United States. Click for: more info on xylazine from CDPH, xylazine info and wound care handouts (PDF) in English and Spanish.
- There has been a Penicillin G Benzathine shortage (Bicillin L-A® or "BIC") since April 2023. ACPHD recommends that Benzathine penicillin G (Bicillin L-A®) is prioritized for treatment of pregnant people infected with or exposed to syphilis and to use alternative treatments for other populations when available. ACPHD also recommends to stick with 2.4 million units of Bicillin L-A® for primary, secondary, and early latent syphilis, since additional doses do not increase efficacy, including among PLWH.
- A shigella outbreak has been reported at an LA conference August 21-24, 2023, with cases among Alameda
 County residents. Alameda County issued a health alert on September 1 and providers are asked to monitor, test and report cases.
- Increase in extensively drug-resistant (XDR) shigellosis: Alameda County issued a health alert in March on this enteric bacterial infection, which is transmitted fecal-orally person-to-person, including through sex, as well as through contaminated water and food. A huge increase in recent years have disproportionately impacting MSM, PLWH, international travelers and people experiencing homelessness. Test people with more than 3 days of diarrhea and cramping with a stool culture and susceptibility testing.

The 2023 update of the East Bay HIV Strategic Plan in English is ready to read and use! The update includes latest HIV data and 2023 strategic activities. More details are posted on our Strategic Plan webpage. The updated plan in Spanish is forthcoming.



Did you miss our **mental health workshop** on March 30? Click here for our guide to East Bay mental health resources and watch the recording.





AND RESOURCES

NEW HIV/STD STUDIES

updated September 2023

Current lists of open Bay Area HIV, hepatitis and COVID studies at UCSF are posted here.

Recent COVID-19 is associated with increase in false positive HIV Ag/Ab tests: an observational study found that a positive SARS-CoV-2 PCR result within 2 weeks of HIV combo testing significantly increased the likelihood of a falsepositive HIV Ag/Ab test (OR 4.22). The false-positive association was strongest for a positive HIV antigen result, which suggests that there may be cross-reactivity between HIV and SARS-CoV-2 proteins. This strengthens the importance of getting an HIV RNA test to confirm positive HIV Ag/Ab results.

HIV telemedicine visits had better outcomes than in-person visits in a 2022 comparison study at an HIV primary care clinic in Arizona. Patients in the study were given the option for telemedicine or in-person visits. Better performance was seen for those receiving telemedicine visits for visit show rate, medical outcomes (viral load suppression, diagnosis rates), cost-effectiveness, time management, and patient and employee acceptance of the clinics.

The CROI 2023 conference took place on February 19-22, one of the most important international scientific conferences covering HIV, STIs, mpox, hepatitis and COVID. You can read selected highlights below, our complete highlights here, more summaries on Dr. Paul Sax's CROI 2023 Really Rapid Review and on NATAP's website.



- **Doxy-PEP**: doxycycline post-exposure prevention for STIs was found again to be effective for MSM and transwomen but not in a group of ciswomen in Kenya. No marked doxycycline resistance has been found yet.
- CAB/RPV (Cabenuva) injectable ART: Thigh injections have drug levels equivalent to gluteal injections. CAB/RPV is highly effective even for people with viremia and adherence challenges and is non-inferior to BIK, but baseline viremia and NNRTI or INSTI resistance are associated with CAB/RPV failures so watch those starting with viremia closely and avoid using it alone with baseline resistance.
- CAB-LA (Apretude) injectable PrEP: there may be some forgiveness with late injections. Failures are rare and can be hard to detect, so get an HIV RNA and Ag/Ab at each injection and guarterly after stopping. Treat people with breakthrough infections with protease-inhibitor-based regimens, such as Symtuza.

Please click here to read our highlights from the updated IAS-USA HIV guidelines.



UPCOMING EVENTS



GRUPO DE CHARLA (SPANISH LANGUAGE WORKING GROUP)

🛅 September 13 from 9:30 am to 11:00 am



EB LINKAGE & RETENTION NETWORK MEETING: HIV STIGMA & LGBT COMMUNITIES

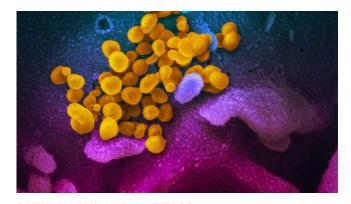
- CA Ending the Epidemics, Community Event, Linkage and Retention, Trainings
- **i** September 21 from 9:00 am to 11:30 am
- California Endowment Oakland, 2000 Franklin St Oakland, California 94612



EAST BAY YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP MEETING

 $\stackrel{\blacksquare}{\Longrightarrow}$ September 21 from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm

LATEST RESOURCES



OMICRON AND VARIANT FAOS

SEPTEMBER 5, 2023

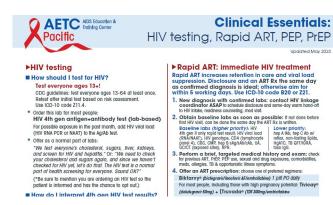


HIV ESSENTIALS AND QUICK CLINICAL GUIDES COLLECTION

READ MORE

Clinical Guides, HIV testing, HIV treatment, Linkage, PEP, PrEP, Prevention, Rapid ART, Retention

READ MORE



HIV ESSENTIALS: TESTING, RAPID ART, PEP AND PREP (IN 2 PAGES!)

SEPTEMBER 5, 2023

Clinical Guides, HIV testing, HIV treatment, Linkage, PEP, PrEP, Rapid ART

READ MORE

← BACK TO UPDATES

