

COVID-19 Update

December 23: Monoclonal Antibody Treatment Scheduling Paused, Fourth Dose Notifications for Immunocompromised Patients, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna Boosters Effective Against Omicron, and NM Masking and Testing Guidelines

Today's issue features an update on the scheduling of monoclonal antibody treatment across NM and information about fourth vaccination dose notifications in MyNM for immunocompromised patients. It also includes details from vaccine manufacturers about the effectiveness of their boosters against the omicron variant, as well as a reminder about workforce masking and testing.

MONOCLONAL ANTIBODY TREATMENT SCHEDULING PAUSED

Scheduling for mAbs treatment at NM has been paused at this time. The omicron variant has rapidly become the prevalent strain in the U.S., and the monoclonal antibody agents currently used for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 infections have no activity against this variant. Scheduling will be reactivated pending the availability of an effective monoclonal antibody agent.

Preliminary studies show the mAbs agent sotrovimab is highly effective against the new variant, and NM is working to secure supplies of the medication to make it available across all regions. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is releasing sotrovimab to state health departments this week; however, similar to previous mAbs agents, availability will be limited. More information about availability and scheduling will be shared once it becomes available.

MYNM FOURTH DOSE NOTIFICATIONS FOR IMMUNOCOMPROMISED PATIENTS

Many immunocompromised patients across NM have been receiving notifications through their MyNM (formerly MyChart) account about a fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This message is automatically generated. Upon administration of a patient's initial COVID-19 vaccine, the MyNM system assigns a Health Maintenance topic based on rules developed by Epic, which are based on latest guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

For some patients who are immunocompromised, the CDC recommends a third primary dose of a two-dose vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) followed by a booster dose. Physicians should discuss the option of a fourth dose with their immunocompromised patients and schedule as appropriate. For more information, please visit [COVID-19 Vaccines for Moderately or Severely](#)

Immunocompromised People on the CDC website. For more information about patient vaccinations, boosters and locations, please visit **COVID-19 Vaccines for People Age 12 and Older** on nm.org.

PFIZER AND MODERNA BOOSTERS EFFECTIVE AGAINST OMICRON

The CDC reported this week that just three weeks after omicron was detected in the U.S., it is now the country's dominant strain of COVID-19, accounting for more than 73% of new cases last week. Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna have announced results of preliminary studies showing that their vaccines are effective at neutralizing omicron with a booster shot.

On December 8, Pfizer and BioNTech **reported** that serum antibodies obtained from people one month after receiving the booster dose neutralized the omicron variant to levels that are comparable to those observed for the wild-type SARS-CoV-2 spike protein after two doses. Sera from individuals who received two doses of the current COVID-19 vaccine did exhibit, on average, more than a 25-fold reduction in neutralization titers against the omicron variant compared to the wild-type, indicating that two doses of the vaccine may not be sufficient to protect against infection with the omicron variant. However, as the vast majority of epitopes targeted by vaccine-induced T-cells are not affected by the mutations in omicron, the companies believe that vaccinated individuals may still be protected against severe forms of the disease.

In a report on December 20, Moderna stated that preliminary research shows that the currently authorized Moderna COVID-19 booster can boost neutralizing antibody levels 37-fold higher than pre-boost levels. Similar to Pfizer, Moderna reported that a two-dose course of its vaccine generated low neutralizing antibodies against the omicron variant. The company did not state whether its two-dose regimen will reduce hospitalizations or deaths from omicron.

Pfizer and BioNTech also **reported** last week that an ongoing study of vaccine effectiveness in children ages 6 months to 17 years demonstrated unfavorable efficacy in those between 2 and 5 years of age. A pre-specified immunogenicity analysis was conducted on a subset of the study population one month following the second dose, using the recommended pediatric dose of 3 µg. Compared to the 16- to 25-year-old population, in which high efficacy was demonstrated, non-inferiority was met for the 6- to 24-month-old population but not for the 2- to under 5-year-old population in this analysis. The companies are now evaluating a third dose of 3 µg for children 6 months to under 5 years. If the three-dose study is successful, Pfizer and BioNTech expect to submit data to regulators to support an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for children 6 months to under 5 years of age in the first half of 2022.

For more information about patient vaccinations, boosters and locations, please visit **COVID-19 Vaccines for People Age 12 and Older** on nm.org.

NM MASKING AND TESTING GUIDELINES

NM continues to require masks to be worn indoors at all locations regardless of vaccination status. This includes conference rooms and in-person meetings. Masks may be removed in settings that are not open to the public, if staff remains in one place and maintains at least 6 feet from all other individuals.

Use the COVID-19 Hotline Employee Triage Questionnaire for a timely response

If you have an immediate question about a potential exposure to COVID-19 or return to work, fill out the **COVID-19 Hotline Employee Triage Questionnaire** to determine next steps. Please do not call the hotline. If you have an order for an NM testing site, remember to **check the hours of each**

testing site and plan for higher-than-normal wait times, as testing volumes have increased. If you need to test prior to traveling or hosting a family gathering, you will need to go to a **community testing site**.

NM continues to experience an increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations across the health system. Please continue to remind patients about the importance of vaccination, booster shots and all appropriate safety measures.

Wishing you and your families the happiest of holidays.



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