

COVID-19 Update

December 30: Updated Guidance for Healthcare Workers, CDC Shortens Isolation and Quarantine for General Population, Reminder on Proper Masking, and Oral Treatments Receive Emergency Use Authorization

Today's issue features updated return-to-work guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for healthcare workers who test positive for or are exposed to COVID-19, as well as updated isolation and quarantine guidelines for the general population. It also includes a reminder about proper masking and information about new treatments recently authorized for COVID-19.

NM UPDATES GUIDANCE FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR OR ARE EXPOSED TO COVID-19

On December 23, CDC released **updated guidance** regarding return to work for healthcare workers who test positive for or are exposed to COVID-19. In an effort to optimize the return-to-work process, NM has revised its return-to-work criteria for the entire NM workforce.

All physicians and staff who test positive for or are exposed to COVID-19 should fill out the **COVID-19 Hotline Employee Triage Questionnaire** to guide them through next steps to return to work and the process to do so.

CDC continues to emphasize that vaccination is the best way to protect against COVID-19, and strongly encourages vaccination for everyone five years and older, and boosters for everyone 16 and older. For vaccination locations, please visit the **COVID-19 Resource Center** on nm.org.

CDC SHORTENS ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE FOR GENERAL POPULATION

To assist you in your discussions with patients, CDC **announced** on December 27 that it shortened the recommended time of isolation for the general population. The latest research on COVID-19 and the omicron variant shows that the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the one to two days before onset of symptoms and the two to three days after. As part of this announcement, CDC also updated the recommended quarantine period for those exposed to COVID-19.

REMINDER ON PROPER MASKING

Please continue to follow masking and other safety guidelines, which remain in place in all NM facilities. Remember that masks must be worn indoors at all NM locations regardless of vaccination status. This includes conference rooms and in-person meetings. Masks can be removed by members of the workforce in settings that are not open to the public, if the individual remains in one place and maintains at least 6 feet from all others.

Masks fit each individual differently, and the fit of the mask is essential in ensuring maximum effectiveness. Follow these recommendations to ensure a proper fit:

- Bend the nose wire to fit close to your face and prevent air from leaking out of the top.
- Tighten the mask by knotting the ear loops and tucking in extra material.
- Use mask-tightening devices such as ear protectors.

For individuals who cannot achieve a close fit with the medical masks, staff can opt to wear a personal cloth mask over the medical mask. Cloth masks alone do not provide adequate protection against omicron. Therefore, it is necessary to wear a three-ply procedural mask, which is available in multiple locations throughout NM.

For more information on masking, please view **Clinical Tips for Universal Masking** on **Physician Forum** and **NMI**.

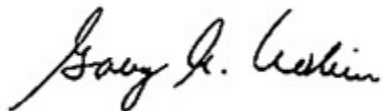
ORAL TREATMENTS RECEIVE EMERGENCY USE AUTHORIZATION

The FDA has granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for both Paxlovid™ (nirmatrelvir; ritonavir) and molnupinavir for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 in patients who are at high risk for progression to severe illness, including hospitalization or death. This includes older individuals and those with conditions such as obesity and heart disease. Since the initial allocation of these medications will be extremely limited, additional communications will be provided once the NM process is finalized.

While the new pills provide another treatment option, vaccination remains the best way to protect against COVID-19.

The omicron variant is spreading rapidly and is significantly impacting our patients and our workforce. Our hospitals continue to experience an increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations, as well as physicians and staff infected with the variant. Please continue to remind patients about the importance of vaccination, booster shots and all appropriate safety measures as we approach the New Year.

Wishing you and your families best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year!



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