

COVID-19 Update

January 6: COVID-19 Workforce Guidance, Patient Testing, Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine Updates, Resumption of Monoclonal Antibody Treatment and Oral Treatments

Today's issue features workforce guidance for those who test positive for or are exposed to COVID-19 and a reminder about patient testing, as well as information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding expanded use of the Pfizer vaccine. It also includes an update on the resumption of monoclonal antibody (mAbs) treatment across NM and details about two new oral medications for the treatment of COVID-19.

COVID-19 WORKFORCE GUIDANCE

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**. Based on your responses, the questionnaire will provide immediate guidance on next steps.

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 test positive for COVID-19, please fill out the **COVID-19 Hotline Triage Questionnaire** starting on day 5 of being off work. The questionnaire will guide you through next steps based on your individual circumstances, including the process and timing for returning to work.

PATIENT TESTING

Due to high testing volumes, it is important that you follow the **COVID-Only Order Matrix** on **Physician Forum** and **NMI** (login required) for COVID-19 testing guidelines. Please note that the BioFire respiratory panel should be used only for hospitalized patients.

CDC EXPANDS USE OF PFIZER VACCINE

On Tuesday, the CDC updated guidelines for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine:

- A single booster dose is now recommended for individuals 12 through 15 years of age.
- The recommended minimum time between the second dose and a booster dose is now **five months** (reduced from six months).
- A third dose 28 days after the second dose is now recommended for children ages 5 through 11 who are moderately or severely immunocompromised.

No changes have been made to the recommendations for booster timing for those who received the Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Those recommendations remain six months after the second dose of the Moderna vaccine and two months after the single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Data from multiple laboratories indicate that a booster dose of the Pfizer vaccine greatly improves antibody response to the omicron variant. Authorizing booster vaccination at five months rather than six may provide better protection sooner against the omicron variant.

RESUMPTION OF MONOCLONAL ANTIBODY TREATMENT

NM has received an initial allocation of Sotrovimab and mAbs treatment and scheduling has resumed. The omicron variant has rapidly become the prevalent strain in the community, and preliminary studies demonstrate Sotrovimab is highly effective against this variant; however, since our supply is extremely limited, we will continue to limit scheduling to highest-risk (tier 1) patients.

For more information about mAbs treatment, please visit the Treatment Resources page on [Physician Forum](#) and [NMI](#) (login required).

ALLOCATION OF ORAL TREATMENTS


The FDA granted EUA for both [Paxlovid](#) and [Molnupiravir](#) oral medications 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. These medications are being allocated to retail pharmacies, and availability is extremely limited.

Physicians are encouraged to review the [NM COVID-19 Guidance for Outpatient Therapy](#) to understand the indications, contraindications and precautions related to these medications. It is the responsibility of the prescribing physician to have an informed discussion with the patient regarding the safety and efficacy of the medication and to provide the patient with a [Patient EUA Fact Sheet](#).

Additionally, please review the new [dot phrase](#) on [Physician Forum](#) and [NMI](#) (login required) for assistance with communicating current oral treatment with patients.

Due to the omicron surge, our hospitals and emergency departments are experiencing significant increases in patients with COVID-19. Across the health system, there are currently 782 patients hospitalized with COVID-19, with 94 of those in the ICU. The rate of patients testing positive continues to increase across our region and data from NM testing facilities reveals a 34% positivity rate. For regular updates, please visit the [By The Numbers page](#) on NMI (login required).

Please continue to remind patients that CDC updated [guidelines regarding quarantine and isolation](#), and encourage them to seek appropriate testing when needed. As always, continue to discuss the importance of vaccination, booster shots and all appropriate safety measures.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary A. Noskin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G' and 'N'.

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