

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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Erie County Department of Health recommends preventive preparedness

Erie, PA — To help keep Erie County healthy and safe in the possibility of future changes with COVID-19, the Erie County Department of Health is actively collaborating with community partners to keep our community ready and prepared to respond accordingly.

“Even as we take stock of how far we have come as a community in responding to COVID-19 with preventive measures such as vaccinations, the Erie County Department of Health reminds everyone that COVID-19 has not gone away,” said Erin Mrenak, Director.

“Let’s all be ready to work together in case another variant of concern emerges that increases the number of cases again. We have the tools and ways to protect our vulnerable loved ones and we don’t want to overburden our hospital systems. We all want our children to continue in-person learning and adults in the community to be able to work—everyone in their best possible health with the least interruption as possible.”

Important action

“The single most important action that everyone can take to reduce the severity of any potential future COVID-19 surge is to stay **up to date with their vaccinations**, which means getting all recommended primary doses and booster doses when eligible,” said Charlotte Berringer, Director of Community Health Services.

“Vaccination has been shown to reduce the risks of getting infection, severe illness, the need for hospitalization and death. It also reduces the risk of developing long COVID illness.” Long COVID is a lingering illness with a range of symptoms, such as fatigue and shortness of breath, which can occur after a COVID-19 infection.

Preparation and community partners

“Since the beginning of our combined response, the Erie County Department of Health has been working with the different county government departments, our local hospital systems, community partners, as well as many other volunteer groups and individuals,” said Berringer.

“It also stays in constant communication with county, state and federal government agencies to stay informed of developments with the pandemic in order to anticipate how Erie County can respond appropriately.”

Preventing spread

The Erie County Department of Health continues to work on the following efforts as part of its multidisciplinary response to COVID-19.

Free vaccination clinics and testing clinics are provided to all eligible residents of Erie County. Clinics with community partner organizations are also held. For a list of sites that offer vaccinations, rapid antigen testing or PCR testing, visit [Eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/](https://eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/).

“Our mobile clinic travels to do vaccinations, surveillance testing and education in areas of the county with underserved communities or with lower vaccination rates,” said Mrenak.

Providing information and outreach

Information sessions are held to provide county residents with facts and answers about COVID-19, vaccines, testing and related topics.

The Erie County Department of Health provides guidance to businesses and schools on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The community is welcome to contact the Erie County Department of Health for guidance. For details on how to stay up to date on vaccines, how to use home test kits, isolation and quarantine and other information, contact covidresponse@eriecountypa.gov or 814-451-6700 or fill out the online Community Form at [Eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/](https://eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/).

Surveillance and monitoring

Positive cases and other information related to COVID-19 are monitored. This includes monitoring and analyzing the county's wastewater for COVID-19 levels. “Keeping track of these different factors helps with decision making, planning and allocation of resources,” said Mrenak.

According to the [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is updated weekly, Erie County is currently at [low risk](#).

At this level, recommendations for preventing the spread of COVID-19 include:

- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines, for 5 years and older, including those who are pregnant and plan on becoming pregnant.
- Anyone may choose to mask at any time, regardless of vaccination status.
- If you are (or live, work or have contact with someone who is) at high risk for severe illness or have a weak immune system, consult your healthcare provider about masking and other precautions.
- Get tested if you have symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Wear a mask if you have symptoms, positive test results, or have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Stay home while waiting for test results. If you have positive test results, even if you don't have symptoms, stay home and apart from others in your home and, if possible, use a separate bathroom; inform your close contacts to stay home and get tested.
- Maintain improved ventilation throughout indoor spaces when possible.

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