

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Kim Cupp

Phone: 419-337-0915

Fulton County COVID Outlook Improving

Wauseon, OH: There has been an encouraging decrease in Fulton County COVID-19 cases since mid-January. At the peak of the COVID-19 Omicron variant surge, the weekly total was 694 positive cases during the seven days prior to 1/21/22. During the following three weeks, the weekly totals fell to 386 (week ending 1.28.22), 181 (week ending 2.4.22) and 74 (week ending 2.11.22). However, the community transmission rate continues to be well above the high level. Fulton County's case rate was 470 cases per 100,000 on February 10, 2022. When using 14 days of data, as is true with Ohio Department of Health's data dashboard, a level below 100 cases per 100,000 population is needed along with a test positivity below 8% to move a community to a moderate level of community transmission. As of 2.1.2022, Fulton County test positivity was 16.5%.

At this point in the pandemic, vaccine is widely available, and residents are urged to seek vaccination including the third or booster dose. Vaccines are safe and strongly encouraged for long term protection against serious illness, hospitalization and death. Due to the Ohio Department of Health recommendation and in collaboration with the Fulton County schools, the Fulton County Health Department is no longer conducting widespread contact tracing, calling parents or sending notifications when individual children or school staff may have been exposed to the virus. Likewise, the Ohio Department of Health contractor, PCG, will no longer be conducting contact tracing for individual Fulton County adults. Groups of positive cases (termed outbreaks or clusters) will be the focus of investigation and follow-up by the local health department.

Despite this change in contact tracing, all residents are asked to be cautious. COVID-19 varies in severity of symptoms. The virus causing COVID-19 affects everyone differently, and until you are in the midst of disease, it is difficult to predict if you will have a mild case or a severe case with the potential for hospitalization. Parents should assume their child may potentially be exposed to an

asymptomatic classmate or staff member with COVID-19 any day they attend school or other crowded indoor settings.

The most current data indicates that individuals are most likely to spread COVID-19 to others during the 1-2 days before symptoms appear and the first 2-3 days following the day symptoms began.

Residents are asked to take the following steps if they or their child have COVID-19 symptoms:

1. Seek testing. The availability of rapid COVID-19 antigen home tests is variable. Residents are encouraged to order test through USPS and keep on hand for when needed at <https://www.covidtests.gov/>. With the Omicron variant, these tests are most accurate when the person being tested has had symptoms for 24 hours or is tested four to five days after the exposure (when they were within 6 ft. for 15 min. of the person who has COVID-19).
2. Stay home when sick. Persons with COVID-19 should isolate at home for at least five days from the start of symptoms or, if asymptomatic, from the day of a positive test. They can return to their usual activities on day 6 if they've been fever-free for at least 24 hours without taking a fever-reducing medicine such as Tylenol and their other symptoms are improving. They should wear a mask when around others for an additional five days so that they don't possibly infect others.
3. Rapidly notify close contacts of their exposure. Close contacts should take several precautions for 10 days after their last date of exposure (when they were within 6 ft. for 15 min. of the person who has COVID-19). They should wear a mask for the next 10 days, especially at work and school. Ideally, if the close contact is not up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccination or has not tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days, they should quarantine at home for the first five days, especially if the contact is a household member. However, the Ohio Department of Health "Mask to Stay/Test to Play" guidance does not restrict close contacts from attending school if they do not have COVID-19 symptoms. Individuals should test on day 5 after exposure or if they develop symptoms, regardless of how minor. If they develop symptoms or test positive, isolate from others for at least five days from the date of the positive test or onset of symptoms.
4. Contact your usual medical provider if you/your child are at higher risk for severe outcomes, symptoms worsen or symptoms have not improved within five days.
5. Contact the Fulton County Health Department at 419-337-0915 if you have questions about quarantine, isolation or current COVID-19 guidelines.

The level of COVID-19 disease in the community is expected to increase at times and decrease at times. Residents are encouraged to be aware of the level of COVID-19 disease present in your community. Several data resources include the Fulton County Health Department Facebook page

and [www.fultoncountyhealthdept](http://www.fultoncountyhealthdept.com), Ohio Department of Health <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/dashboards> , the Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/coronavirus-covid-19/map/ohio> and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home> . Be kind and encourage friends and family to take precautions that are appropriate for them. Age, health condition and vaccination status matter and determine a person's susceptibility to getting a contagious disease such as COVID-19 and experiencing severe symptoms. Stay home if you are sick and follow the most current isolation and quarantine guidelines to protect yourself and others. If you haven't already, consider getting vaccinated. Get the third dose/booster dose if able.

For more information visit www.fultoncountyhealthdept.com or call your Fulton County Health Department at 419-337-0915.

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