On November 26, 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified a new variant, B.1.1.529, as a Variant of Concern and named it Omicron and on November 30, 2021, the United States also classified it as a Variant of Concern. CDC has been actively monitoring and preparing for this variant, and we will continue to work diligently with other U.S. and global public health and industry partners to learn more. Despite the detection of Omicron, Delta remains the predominant strain in the United States.

**CDC Media Statement on Omicron Variant**

Link: [https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1201-omicron-variant.html](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1201-omicron-variant.html)

*The California and San Francisco Departments of Public Health have confirmed that a recent case of COVID-19 among an individual in California was caused by the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529). The individual was a traveler who returned from South Africa on November 22, 2021. The individual had mild symptoms that are improving, is self-quarantining and has been since testing positive. All close contacts have been contacted and have tested negative......The recent emergence of the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529) further emphasizes the importance of vaccination, boosters, and general prevention strategies needed to protect against COVID-19. Everyone 5 and older should get vaccinated and boosters are recommended for everyone 18 years and older.*


**IMPORTANT Booster Update from the CDC**

The CDC provided additional guidance for booster shots on November 29, 2021. [CDC Booster Guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/booster/) removes barriers and provides clarity on eligibility requirements. [WNE Booster Guidelines](https://www.wne.edu/covidsafety/) will be updated to reflect this new guidance.

Key Points the WNE Community needs to know:

- All adults 18 years or older SHOULD receive a booster shot.
- Faculty, staff, or students who received Pfizer and Moderna as their primary series can get a booster six months after their primary vaccination series.
- Faculty, staff, or students who received Johnson & Johnson's/ Janssen as their primary series can get a booster two months after their shot.

WNE's next booster clinic is for Johnson & Johnson/Janssen on Friday, December 3, 2021, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Open slots are available!
Use the QR code provided here to choose the date and time of your preferred appointment:

[QR Code]

OR use the following link:

Policy Updates

Library Study Space—Clarification
Students using the small individual study rooms located in D'Amour Library are NOT required to wear masks when using the area. Students are expected to adhere to the mask policy if the room is used for work beyond single-occupancy, such as tutoring or small group work.

Update: Exposure Guidelines for Vaccinated Individuals
CDC has updated its recommendations for fully vaccinated individuals after exposure to a positive case. WNE will be implementing these guidelines immediately.

Guidelines are as follows:

- Get tested 5-7 days post-exposure (previous guidelines recommended 3-5 days) if you are identified as a close contact of someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- Wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days after exposure or until a negative test result is achieved.
- Self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and notify Health Services if you become symptomatic.
- Get tested if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, and isolate until after test results are back and Health Services clears you.

COVID-19 Virus Transmission Levels
Statewide Transmission Levels
A review of statewide data indicates that Massachusetts has had a slight decrease in the overall number of new cases. Positivity rates for the Commonwealth are currently 3.72%. There is a slight increase in hospitalization rates; however, mortality rates remain low and steady. Massachusetts Interactive COVID-19 Dashboard
Community Levels

The positivity rate for Hampden County is currently 5.24%, and vaccines have increased to 68.5%.

WNE Campus Levels

Positive cases reported by WNE remain stable, and there are no reported issues with isolation or quarantine housing. Due to the Thanksgiving Holiday, the WNE dashboard reporting period was modified and published on Wednesday, November 24, 2021, instead of Friday, November 26, 2021. WNE COVID-19 Dashboard.

If you have questions or concerns about this weekly update, contact Health Services at Healthservices@wne.edu or 413-782-1211.

Respectfully,
Basil A. Stewart
Vice President for Finance and Administration
Chair, Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT)

Kathleen M. Noone
Director, Center for Health & Wellness