

COVID-19 Update Lancaster BOH June 29, 2022

Free COVID-19 Test Kits, no restrictions

COVID-19 rapid antigen test kits are available free of charge to any Lancaster resident or town employee. The kits are for self-testing at home. The BOH is holding a number of kits in reserve.

The kits are available at the following distribution centers:

1. Community Center/COA: Mon - Fri 8:00 am - 11:00 am
2. Thayer Memorial Library: Thu 1:00 pm – 7:00 pm, Sat 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
3. Police Department - Mon - Fri 8:00 am - 2:00 pm
4. Fire Department – Wed 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm, Sat 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

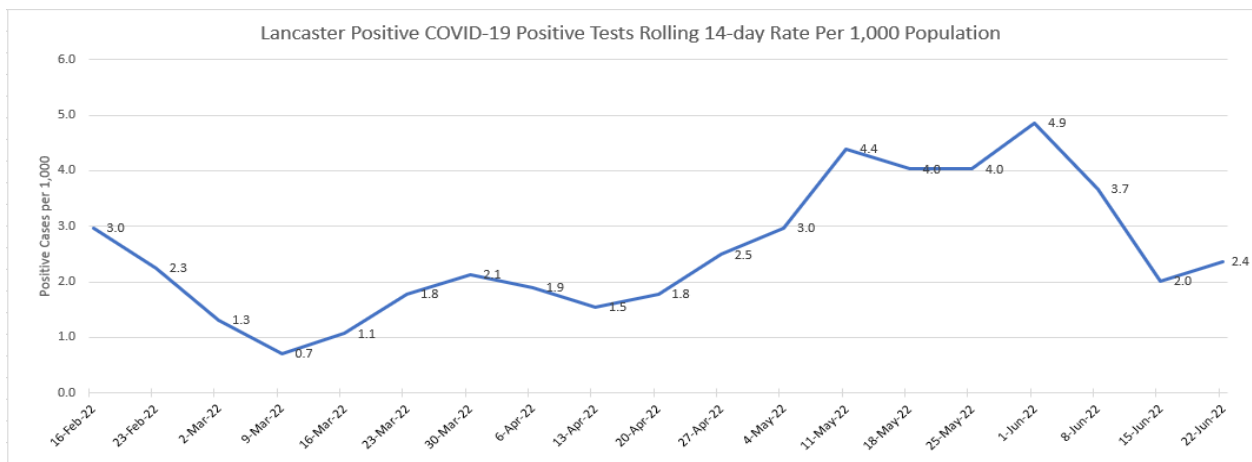
In addition, free at-home rapid antigen COVID-19 test kits can be ordered at <https://www.covidtests.gov/> There is a limit of 8 per household.

Expiration Dates

The iHealth kits have a factory determined expiration date of 2022-07-20 however this has been extended by the FDA as of March 29 to an expiration date of 2022-10-19. The company will continue to analyze test kit stability and will apply for FDA extensions until it is determined the kits are no longer accurate for use. <https://ihealthlabs.com/pages/news>

Latest Case Rate and Vaccination Data

Both Town and State case rates are trending down again, after a brief rise. The numbers do not appear to be of great concern. The current variants (see below) while highly transmissible are not as likely to cause severe disease, hospitalization, or death as the Delta variant but are still extremely dangerous. There is a new study indicating that Long COVID is more likely to occur with repeated episodes of infection.



The Town vaccination rate continues to lag the State and other neighboring municipalities:

COVID-19 Comparative Vaccination Data - Lancaster vs. Surrounding Municipalities

| | MA rank | Value | Bolton | Sterl | Huds | Leom | Clint | Harv | Fitch | Lanc | |
|------------------------------------|---------|-------|--------|-------|------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|
| Metrics eff. March 11, 2022 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| % receiving at least one dose | | | >95% | 86% | 86% | 87% | 87% | 74% | 72% | 67% | |
| % fully vaccinated | #5 | 77.9% | 95% | 79% | 77% | 75% | 77% | 66% | 62% | 60% | 17.9% |
| Metrics eff. April 1, 2022 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| % receiving at least one dose | | | >95% | 87% | 87% | 88% | 87% | 74% | 72% | 67% | |
| % fully vaccinated | #5 | 78.2% | 95% | 79% | 77% | 76% | 78% | 66% | 62% | 60% | 18.2% |
| Metrics eff. May 12, 2022 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| % receiving at least one dose | | | >95% | 87% | 87% | 88% | 87% | 74% | 73% | 67% | |
| % fully vaccinated | #5 | 79.3% | >95% | 80% | 78% | 76% | 78% | 67% | 63% | 60% | 19.3% |
| Metrics eff. June 1, 2022 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| % receiving at least one dose | | | >95% | 87% | 88% | 88% | 88% | 74% | 73% | 67% | |
| % fully vaccinated | #5 | 79.8% | >95% | 80% | 78% | 77% | 79% | 67% | 63% | 61% | 18.8% |
| Metrics eff. June 23, 2022 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| % receiving at least one dose | | | >95% | 88% | 88% | 88% | 88% | 74% | 73% | 67% | |
| % fully vaccinated | #5 | 79.9% | >95% | 80% | 78% | 77% | 79% | 67% | 64% | 61% | 18.9% |

From the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/omicron-variant.html#:~:text=The%20three%20most%20common%20lineages,19%2C%20including%20the%20Delta%20variant>

What We Know about Omicron: CDC has been collaborating with global public health and industry partners to learn about Omicron, as we continue to monitor its course. We are continuing to evaluate how easily it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, and how well available vaccines and medications work against it.

Spread: The Omicron variant, like other variants, is comprised of a number of lineages and sublineages. The three most common lineages of Omicron currently are BA.1, BA.1.1 and BA.2. The Omicron variant spreads more easily than earlier variants of the virus that cause COVID-19, including the Delta variant. CDC expects that anyone with Omicron infection, regardless of vaccination status or whether or not they have symptoms, can spread the virus to others.

Symptoms: Persons infected with the Omicron variant can present with symptoms similar to previous variants. The presence and severity of symptoms can be affected by COVID-19 vaccination status, the presence of other health conditions, age, and history of prior infection.

Severe Illness: Omicron infection generally causes less severe disease than infection with prior variants. Preliminary data suggest that Omicron may cause more mild disease, although some people may still have severe disease, need hospitalization, and could die from the infection with this variant. Even if only a small percentage of people with Omicron infection need hospitalization, a large volume of cases in a community could overwhelm the healthcare system which is why it's important to take steps to protect yourself.

Vaccines: COVID-19 vaccines remain the best public health measure to protect people from COVID-19 and reduce the likelihood of new variants emerging. This includes primary series, booster shots, and additional doses for those who need them. Current vaccines protect against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths due to infection with the Omicron variant. However, breakthrough infections in people who are vaccinated can occur. People who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines and get COVID-19 are less likely to develop serious illness than those who are unvaccinated and get COVID-19.

Treatments: Scientists are working to determine how well existing treatments for COVID-19 work. Some monoclonal antibody treatments are less effective against Omicron's BA.2 lineage, but continue to work against BA.1 and BA.1.1 lineages. Other non-monoclonal antibody treatments remain effective against Omicron. Public health agencies work with healthcare providers to ensure that effective treatments are used appropriately to treat patients.

We have the Tools to Fight Omicron

Vaccines: Getting vaccinated and staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines is the best way to protect yourself and others against the Omicron variant. CDC recommends that everyone 5 years and older protect themselves from COVID-19 by getting vaccinated. Everyone ages 12 years and older should stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines and get a booster shot when eligible. Jeff Paster note – vaccines are not available for ages 6 months to 5 years. Find a COVID-19 vaccine or booster: Search [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), text your ZIP code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find locations near you.

Masks: Well-fitting masks offer protection against all variants. In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. If you are sick and need to be around others, or are caring for someone who has COVID-19, wear a mask. If the COVID-19 Community Level where you live is

Low: Wear a mask based on your personal preference, informed by your personal level of risk.

Medium: If you are at risk for severe illness, talk to your healthcare provider about wearing masks indoors in public. If you live with or will gather with someone at risk for severe illness, wear a mask when indoors with them.

High: If you are 2 or older, wear a well-fitting mask indoors in public, regardless of vaccination status or individual risk (including in K-12 schools and other community settings). If you are at risk for severe illness, wear a mask or respirator that provides you with greater protection.

Testing: Tests can tell you if you have COVID-19. Learn how to get tested. Two types of tests are used to test for current infection: nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs) and antigen tests. NAAT and antigen tests can tell you if you have a current infection. Self-tests can be used at home or anywhere, are easy to use, and produce rapid results. If your self-test has a positive result, isolate and talk to your healthcare provider. If you have any questions about your self-test result, call your healthcare provider or public health department. (Lancaster BOH) Individuals can use CDC's COVID-19 Viral Testing Tool to help determine what kind of test to seek. Your test result will only tell you if you do or do not have COVID-19. It will not tell you which variant caused your infection. Visit your state, tribal, local, or territorial health department's website for the latest local information on testing.

It is important to use all tools available to protect yourself and others.

Please contact jeffLBOHpaster@gmail.com if you have any questions.