



Dear Community Members,

The highly transmissible Omicron variant continues to spread across the country and state, increasing positive case rates and limiting the number of health care workers available to respond. Earlier in this pandemic, we experienced decreased hospital capacity due to the large number of COVID-19 positive patients who were admitted to the hospital. Unfortunately, now we are facing a different challenge. Due to higher transmission rates, more health care workers are testing positive and required to isolate which has decreased the number of frontline workers available to care for those who are hospitalized.

Testing has increased across our state and people are experiencing longer wait times to get tested. You have likely seen information in the media about the different types of COVID-19 tests on the market. As more home COVID-19 test kits become available, we thought it would be helpful to answer a few of the most common questions regarding COVID-19 testing.

### ***What types of COVID tests are there?***

Antigen tests: rapid, do-it-yourself home test

PCR tests: test performed in a lab or clinic

Antibody tests: not used to diagnose COVID-19

### ***What's the difference between PCR and antigen tests?***

The PCR test is much more accurate at identifying an infection because it can amplify traces of the virus. This means the machine can detect COVID-19 even if there is only a small amount of virus present. This may even allow you to tell if you're infected a day or two before you develop any COVID-19 symptoms.

The antigen tests don't magnify the amount of virus in the sample, so you have to have more virus in your system in order to test positive. This means you could potentially test negative on a home test even if you are infected – we see this most commonly at either the beginning or tail end of the infection when there is less virus present.

### ***When should I test?***

The CDC recommends testing if you develop any new symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection or five to seven days after exposure to someone with COVID-19, even if you don't have any symptoms. This strategy gives enough time for the body to develop a viral load that can be detected by a test.

With the Omicron variant, there have been reports that home tests are negative during the first day or two of symptoms. This means that even if you have symptoms, you may want to wait a day or two to take the first test, especially if you have a limited supply of at home test kits.

### ***How many at home tests should I take?***

At least two. Why? Home tests are most accurate when you use them serially- at least two over the course of a few days. If you have a limited supply of home tests, you will want to aim for the time when you are most likely to get an accurate result- say, on Day 5 and Day 7 after exposure. By repeating the testing, you're allowing the virus to potentially grow, where now you can detect it.



### ***If I test negative- how accurate are negative tests?***

There can be false negatives, especially soon after exposure when not much virus is present in your body, or if the virus is replicating somewhere other than where you were swabbed- for instance, in your throat instead of your nose. That's why you should test at least twice. **Any test is just a snapshot of what's happening in the part of your body that was sampled at that moment. That's all it tells you.**

### ***If I test positive- how accurate are positive tests?***

There can be false positives but it is highly unlikely. If you test positive on either a PCR or antigen test, then your positive for COVID-19.

### ***Can current COVID-19 tests check for the omicron, delta and other variants?***

Yes. Our current understanding is that available PCR and antigen tests should detect these variants. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is currently confirming this information.

The FDA works closely with test developers to identify potential impacts of viral mutations on FDA authorized COVID-19 tests to ensure there is minimal impact on test performance when new variants arise. The FDA has a webpage about certain COVID-19 tests for which they have identified potential impacts on performance due to SARS-CoV-2 viral mutations. <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/sars-cov-2-viral-mutations-impact-covid-19-tests>





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### Related COVID-19 Metrics from Other Dashboards



Currently in Hospital

**70**

with COVID-19

Hospital Dashboard



Fully Vaccinated

**61%**

Residents + DoD/VA (5+)

Vaccine Dashboard



Test Positivity

**18.3%**

Last 7 Days

Testing Dashboard

## Alaska's COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard Summary as of 01/07/2022

For more information about vaccines, visit [covidvax.alaska.gov](https://covidvax.alaska.gov).

### Vaccination Summary of Residents + DoD/VA Ages 5+



Received 1+ Dose

**463,191**

Since December, 2020



Fully Vaccinated

**413,919**

Since December, 2020



Received Booster

**153,920**

Since August 13, 2021



## What's New?

**Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine Updates:** CDC updated several recommendations for people who received the vaccine.

1. People ages 5 years and older with moderately to severely weakened immune systems should get an additional dose of vaccine 28 days after their second shot.
2. People who received a Pfizer vaccine for their primary series can now get a booster shot 5 months after they complete their series.
3. Everyone ages 12 years and older should now get a booster shot.





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**!** NEW VACCINE UPDATE

## CDC Updated Recommendations for those who received a **Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine**

Age	How long after initial COVID-19 vaccination series?	Which shot to get
5–11	With a weakened immune system: 28 days	Pfizer-BioNTech (ADDITIONAL DOSE)
12–15	5 months	Pfizer-BioNTech (BOOSTER DOSE)
16+	5 months	Pfizer-BioNTech (BOOSTER DOSE)

**FIND OUT MORE AT [CDC.GOV/CORONAVIRUS](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)**

**Moderna Vaccine Booster Update:** The two-dose Moderna vaccine is available to those 18 years and older. On Friday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, the FDA and CDC updated booster eligibility to at least 5 months after completion of the COVID-19 vaccine series (was previously 6 months). This will bring Moderna vaccine in line with Pfizer’s booster recommendations as well.

**CDC Reports Record Number of Child COVID-19 Hospitalizations:** CDC Director Rochelle Walensky reported today that pediatric hospitalizations are at the highest point they have ever been during the pandemic. The increase was seen most in children under 5, the only age group not yet eligible for the vaccine.

**CDC & DHSS Updates & Shortens Recommended Isolation & Quarantine Period for General Population:** CDC has released new recommendations for isolation & quarantine and DHSS also updated isolation & quarantine guidance to align with the new CDC recommendations. Main change is those who test positive for COVID-19 to isolate for at least 5 days instead of at least 10 days. This guidance does not apply to health care workers, long-term care facilities, correctional facilities and other congregate settings, additional guidance for these venues will be forthcoming. **Please note local community leadership (e.g., city mayor or tribal council) may decide to continue up to a 14-day quarantine for residents of their communities, based on local conditions and needs.** More information can be found at the following link- <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1227-isolation-quarantine-guidance.html>

**CDC Updates COVID-19 Isolation/Quarantine Guidelines for K-12 Schools:** The new recommended policy shortens the period of isolation time following infection to bring schools in line with the agency’s guidance for the general public. **CDC continues to recommend indoor masking in K-12 schools for all individuals age 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

**ANMC Campus Drive-Thru or Walk-Up COVID-19 Testing Site Information:** ANMC testing sites are experiencing a substantial increase in volumes. ANMC is increasing testing site capacity to add a lane of traffic, by the end of this weekend.





Patients must register for a test in advance at <https://covid19test.anmc.org/> and wait for the text message confirmation that their order is ready before proceeding to the testing site. Once a patient receives confirmation that their order is prepared, they should proceed to the testing site prior to 30 minutes before closing. If this is not possible, patients desiring a test should wait until the next business day to get their test. Please note, testing sites are currently experiencing long registration wait times and ANTHC remains closed on Saturdays at this time.

- Drive thru: Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m.-6 p.m. (closed on Saturdays)
- Walk-up: Sunday-Friday 10 a.m.-noon and 4-6 p.m. (closed on Saturdays)
- For patients and staff needing asymptomatic or symptomatic COVID-19 test on a Saturday, please use one of the Anchorage municipality testing sites: <https://covid-response-moa-muniorg.hub.arcgis.com/pages/testing>. Municipality of Anchorage test results will not be entered into Cerner so should not be done for pre-procedural testing.

**ANMC Visitor Restrictions Increased:** As of Friday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, due to the increase in COVID-19 cases in our community and to protect the health of patients and staff, ANMC is restricting visitors to inpatient units and emergency department. Exceptions are listed below:

- One birth partner in Labor and Delivery. Birth partners must stay in the unit. If a birth partner leaves, re-entry is not allowed.
- One parent or guardian for pediatric patients not in isolation. Parent or guardian must stay in the unit. If a parent or guardian leaves, re-entry is not allowed.
- End-of-life patients will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

ANMC will utilize technology to connect family members whenever possible.

Everyone entering the building will be screened and people must sanitize or wash their hands before entering. All approved birth partners, parents, guardians, or exceptions will be provided approved visitor identification.

**Testing Before a Surgical Procedure:** In order to minimize rescheduling or canceling surgical procedures due to receiving a positive COVID-19 diagnosis for COVID-19 infection upon arrival in Anchorage, ANMC is strongly encouraging all patients, regardless of their vaccination status, to get tested prior to traveling to Anchorage (if testing is available in your area). When pre-travel testing is not available, ANMC will continue to conduct a test upon arrival in Anchorage, if the patient's arrival is 12 hours or more before the procedure and during testing site hours. This also helps ensure a patient's procedure does not have to be rescheduled and the patient has to stay in quarantine in Anchorage until their infection period has passed.

## Local Clinic Service Updates

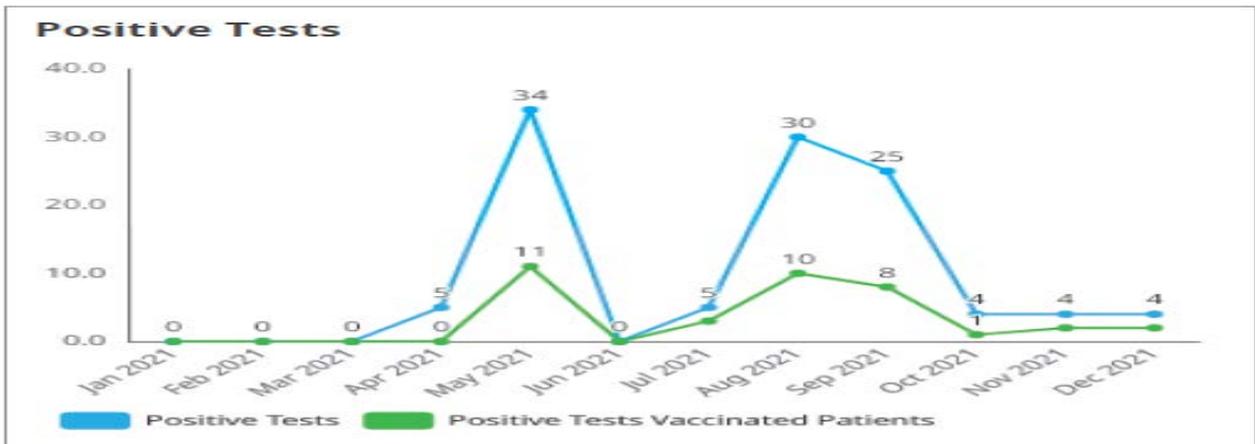
- **Clinic Services:** Currently NOT accepting walk-ins. Call clinics for an appointment. **Please DO NOT DELAY YOUR MEDICAL CARE. Prevention and early detection can catch small problems before they become big problems.** Please make sure you and your family is caught up on general health recommendations to stay well.



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- COVID-19 Testing:** If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild or regardless of your vaccination status, please get tested. Together we can stop the spread of the virus in our communities.

	COVID-19 Testing December 2021	COVID-19 Testing YTD	COVID-19 Results Negative YTD	COVID-19 Results Positive December	COVID-19 Results Positive YTD
Chenege	5	258	258	0	0
Nanwalek	26	1161	1144	0	17
Port Graham	40	1014	1012	0	2
Seward	50	1344	1260	4	84
Tatitlek	15	436	402	0	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>4213</b>	<b>4076</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>137</b>



- COVID-19 Treatment:** All clinics have doses of REGEN-COV which is a monoclonal antibody treatment used to treat a positive COVID-19 infection in certain individuals at high risk of developing severe COVID-19.
- COVID-19 Vaccine:** Vaccines are available at all clinics. Call your local clinic to schedule an appointment. **Getting vaccinated can reduce your chances of severe illness, hospitalization and death.**
- 2021-2022 Flu Vaccine:** All clinics have flu vaccine available. Please contact your local clinic to get your flu shot. Flu vaccine rates as follows:

Chenege Vaccination Rates		Nanwalek Vaccination Rates		Port Graham Vaccination Rates	
Total Population Vaccinated	21	Total Population Vaccinated	71	Total Population Vaccinated	61
Total Population	43	Total Population	233	Total Population	155
Percent Vaccinated	49%	Percent Vaccinated	30%	Percent Vaccinated	39%
Tatitlek Vaccination Rates		Seward Vaccination Rates		Region Vaccination Rates	
Total Population Vaccinated	48	Total Population Vaccinated	176	Total Population Vaccinated	377
Total Population	70	Total Population	661	Total Population	1162
Percent Vaccinated	69%	Percent Vaccinated	27%	Percent Vaccinated	32%



### ***Can COVID-19 vaccines cause variants?***

No. COVID-19 vaccines do not cause variants. COVID-19 vaccines limit the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, reducing ways for the virus to change and helping prevent new variants from emerging.

- **Dental Services:** We are working to get additional dental services scheduled for village communities.  
Seward Dental Service Dates (Chugachmiut): January 10<sup>th</sup> to January 14<sup>th</sup>  
Tatitlek Dental Service Dates (Chugachmiut): February 14<sup>th</sup> to February 18<sup>th</sup>
- **Optometry Services:** SCF has resumed optometry services for Region as follows:  
Nanwalek- January 24<sup>th</sup> to January 28<sup>th</sup>  
Port Graham- May 16<sup>th</sup> to May 20<sup>th</sup>  
Seward- July 11<sup>th</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup>  
Tatitlek- September 12<sup>th</sup> to September 16<sup>th</sup>  
Chenequa- September 26<sup>th</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>
- **Pharmacy Services:** Please be sure to call your pharmacy and/or clinic for refills at least 1 week before your supply runs out to avoid an emergency situation.
- **Diabetes Prevention & Control Program:** Our team is able to assist in testing for prediabetes or diabetes, as well as provide information and support on diabetes (which includes prediabetes, diabetes type I and 2, and gestational). We offer diabetes medication education, diabetes self-management and education support, medical nutrition therapy and exercise education.
- **MyHealth Enrollment:** A “COVID-19 Center” has been created within the MyHealth patient portal. The COVID-19 Center within the portal will allow users to view and print their COVID-19 testing results and record of COVID-19 immunizations. Also if you are interested in receiving any of your lab testing results as soon as they become available (including testing results from ANTHC) and want to avoid any delays in getting your lab results- sign up for a MyHealth account by contacting your local clinic to gain access to your account.
- **Purchased and Referred Care (PRC):** PRC funds are limited. Necessary medical services are to be provided by the Chugachmiut and/or other IHS or Tribal facilities or providers, such as Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC), Southcentral Foundation (SCF) or Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), except when there is an emergent need for services to prevent death or serious impairment.

**For non-emergent cases, prior authorization is required.** It is essential to contact your local clinic before receiving any services at any non-Tribal health care facility, or within 72 hours of an emergency room visit. Also following a referred appointment, a follow-up appointment at a Chugachmiut operated clinic is required for review of care and to discuss further treatment.



## Chugachmiut

- **Universal Masking:** To help ensure the health and safety of everyone, our universal masking policy applies to all staff, contractors, patients and visitors at all Chugachmiut buildings and property.

### Chugachmiut's COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard

**TAKE ACTION-** Choosing to get vaccinated is the single most important action you can take to protect yourself and your community.

### Region Vaccination Series Complete = 654

Chenege Vaccination Rates		Nanwalek Vaccination Rates		Port Graham Vaccination Rates	
Total Population Vaccinated:	28	Total Population Vaccinated:	146	Total Population Vaccinated:	114
Total Population:	43	Total Population:	233	Total Population:	155
Percent Vaccinated	65%	Percent Vaccinated	63%	Percent Vaccinated	74%
Population >5 Vaccinated	28	Population >5 Vaccinated	146	Population >5 Vaccinated	114
Total Population >5	41	Total Population >5	218	Total Population >5	144
Percent >5 Vaccinated	68%	Percent >5 Vaccinated	67%	Percent >5 Vaccinated	79%
Population >12 Vaccinated	28	Population >12 Vaccinated	146	Population >12 Vaccinated	105
Total Population >12	37	Total Population >12	175	Total Population >12	122
Percent >12 Vaccinated	76%	Percent >12 Vaccinated	83%	Percent >12 Vaccinated	86%
Population >65 Vaccinated	5	Population >65 Vaccinated	13	Population >65 Vaccinated	20
Total Population >65	5	Total Population >65	16	Total Population >65	20
Percent >65 Vaccinated	100%	Percent >65 Vaccinated	81%	Percent >65 Vaccinated	100%
Vaccine Series Complete = 28		Vaccine Series Complete = 146		Vaccine Series Complete = 114	
Tatitlek Vaccination Rates		Seward Vaccination Rates		Region Vaccination Rates	
Total Population Vaccinated:	50	Total Population Vaccinated:	316	Total Population Vaccinated:	654
Total Population:	70	Total Population:	661	Total Population:	1162
Percent Vaccinated	71%	Percent Vaccinated	48%	Percent Vaccinated	56%
Population >5 Vaccinated	50	Population >5 Vaccinated	316	Population >5 Vaccinated	645
Total Population >5	67	Total Population >5	621	Total Population >5	1022
Percent >5 Vaccinated	75%	Percent >5 Vaccinated	51%	Percent >5 Vaccinated	63%
Population >12 Vaccinated	46	Population >12 Vaccinated	304	Population >12 Vaccinated	629
Total Population >12	58	Total Population >12	556	Total Population >12	948
Percent >12 Vaccinated	79%	Percent >12 Vaccinated	55%	Percent >12 Vaccinated	66%
Population >65 Vaccinated	8	Population >65 Vaccinated	57	Population >65 Vaccinated	103
Total Population >65	8	Total Population >65	76	Total Population >65	125
Percent >65 Vaccinated	100%	Percent >65 Vaccinated	75%	Percent >65 Vaccinated	82%
Vaccine Series Complete = 50		Vaccine Series Complete = 316		Vaccine Series Complete = 654	

\* Note population data updated after verifying active population lists & current village residents

### Community & Family Services Division Updates

- **“Laugh and Learn” Series:** Everyone is invited and welcome to attend! Offered virtually via Zoom link! Text 907-764-1945 for link invite!
- **Chugachmiut Regional Alcoholic Anonymous Meetings:** Held every Tuesday and Thursday at 12:00pm. Join meeting via Zoom. Meeting ID: 748 764 6244



## Additional Informational Resources

- The Alaska Department of Health & Social Services COVID-19 home page online at: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/default.aspx>
- The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 home page online at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/>
- **PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCE ECHO:** Please join the DHSS Public Health Team from 12:00pm to 1:00pm on Wednesdays for weekly updates about important public health topics, including COVID-19. Anyone is welcome to join and ask questions.

You can join the Zoom videoconference by registering at [https://alaska.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_i2syaoh3SCCTKY2U289H\\_Q](https://alaska.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_i2syaoh3SCCTKY2U289H_Q)

Sincerely,

*K. Baker*

Kelley Baker, Health Services Division Director

