

## PFT COVID Update 2-23-22: Vax for the Young - Masks Off - Omicron Immunity - Links

# CORONAVIRUS



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## Updates

### State of the Fatigued Union.

We'd love to be able to package up this week's Coronavirus information into a neat bundle labeled "*pandemic on the run, normal life on the horizon.*"

But it's just not that simple—and many of us are struggling with what the next prudent steps will be when it comes to vaccines for young children and toddlers, mask mandates, the lifting of restrictions, and whether or not we'll ever achieve herd immunity from COVID-19 and its variants.

Since there is no simple answer, we've tried to curate information that fully explores the questions we've been hearing most.

[The Public Source article available here tackles the issue of vaccinations](#) for infants and toddlers in a straightforward manner; one which that includes a heavy dose of understanding for parents who may have questions or concerns that could prevent them from seeking out Covid-19 vaccinations for young children.

However, there's a compelling case to expand the vaccination program once it has been fully approved for the youngest among us by the FDA .

**Dr. Andrew Nowalk**, an associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and clinical director of the Division of Infectious Diseases at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, expressed similar confidence about the vaccine's safety.

"The main things I hear from parents are: 'This was rushed.' 'We didn't know about this.' 'This is brand new technology.' When I hear that, I will say to them, No. 1, this

technology has been around for 25 years in one form or another ... and it's been used in coronavirus vaccines for a decade.”

Equally important—the article includes several verified links to information you can really use and trust to make an informed decision. The highlight in this closing section is the link to a [CNN op-ed from a pediatrician turned new mom](#) that puts a number of fears – reasonable or otherwise – to rest.

## The Next Big Question Isn't As Easy To Answer As You Think.

*When do the masks end?*

While the Governor ended the statewide school mask mandate\*\* on January 17, 2022, the great mask debate has soldiered on within school districts that have been left to determine mask and mitigation rules on their own—based on their individual established safety plans.

In the *Education Week* article “[When Can Schools Get on the Mask ‘Off-Ramp’? 4 Questions to Consider](#)” the local and regional debate on masking takes center stage. And to the story’s credit—a number of issues relating to masks (*necessity, type, efficacy, etc.*) are taken on objectively.

Our goal isn’t to take a side—but rather, to help you understand the concerns on either side of the debate.

“Much of that decisionmaking will depend on how long it takes for omicron to recede. Even so, school leaders should start planning longer-term pandemic responses, **said Sara Bode**, chair-elect of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health.

“We had hoped that we would be in a [school masking] off-ramp situation right now,” Bode said. “We are probably three or four months off of that still—not necessarily because of the risk to the students themselves but because of the ongoing risk of them carrying it to other people in the community, if you’ve got a high community spread rate.”

\*\* [PA mandates remain in place](#) for early learning programs and child care facilities.

## 73% of America Now Immune To The Omicron Variant.

This is more a reason for guarded optimism rather than outright celebration, however.

[As the Associated Press reports here](#), this will likely prevent or shorten new illnesses among protected people and help to reduce the amount of virus that is circulating overall. One undeniable benefit could be a reduction of stress and strain on overworked ICU and hospital staffs nationwide.

But by no means does this signify a real “end point” to the pandemic.

“The coronavirus — the current variant or [future ones](#) that are sure to pop up — remains a dangerous germ. It is still infecting more than 130,000 Americans and killing more than 2,000 every day. Tens of millions of people remain vulnerable.

And there will be [future outbreaks](#). The notion of a “herd immunity” that could stop the virus has slipped away under the harsh reality of new variants, waning immunity, and the rejection of vaccines by some Americans.” -- [AP News](#)

The point is, the more information you engage with, the more likely you are to make an informed decision for you and the ones you love.

## Information Links That Bear Repeating:

Below please find additional links providing helpful information you can bookmark and count on as the COVID-19 situation changes and evolves.

[AFT/AFTPA Coronavirus Resources & Updates for Members](#)

[Find a Vaccine Provider Near You](#)

[AFT/PFT Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)

-- A Negotiated, Free Benefit to Members

[Click for EAP Information Flyer](#) (*includes login info*)

[Click for Life Skills Solutions Website](#) (*login upper right*)

[AFT Share My Lesson Stress Management Resources](#) (*searchable*)

[Download the PA COVID-Alert Tracking App](#)

[National Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) Coronavirus Resources](#)

[CDC Data Tracking Page](#)

[CDC Vaccine Information Landing Page](#)

[PPS Coronavirus Resources and Links](#)

[PA Department of Health Coronavirus Resources](#)

[PA-Specific Resources from Senator Casey](#)

[Student Debt Relief Resources](#)

[Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) Rumor Control](#)

[Coronavirus Testing Locations \(view interactive map mid page\)](#)



### Coronavirus Self-Checker

A guide to help you make decisions and seek appropriate medical care

\*\* PFT Coronavirus Updates Released Periodically As Needed \*\*

Missed an update or message? [View our archive of COVID-19 Updates here](#).

Please keep in touch—keep sharing your ideas, your questions and your concerns.

In solidarity—

Dan Evans

PFT Communications Director