

PFT Coronavirus Update: 3-23-22 - BA.2 - Therapeutics - Allergy Confusion - Links

CORONAVIRUS Updates

The logo for PFT (PFT Health) is a blue triangle with the letters 'PFT' in yellow and white inside it.

New BA.2 Variant Emerges Across US.

The emergence of the BA.2 “stealth” variant as the soon-to-be dominant COVID-19 variant in the United States brings with it logical questions and concerns—particularly in light of the recent loosening of mask and mitigation restrictions almost everywhere nationwide.

We’ve sourced a pretty solid [article from Yahoo News/USA TODAY to help answer your questions](#) and tried to put the threat of this (*and other*) variants into context.

Here’s a quick Q&A summary you might find helpful:

1. **Is the BA.2 Variant more transmissible than Omicron?** Yes. Almost doubly so.
2. **Is the BA.2 Variant more severe than Omicron was?** No—it does not appear to be.
3. **Do vaccinations provide good protection against this variant?** Yes. Particularly if you have received your original dose(s) and your booster shot.
4. **I’ve already had COVID-19. Am I immune?** No. However, you will likely receive significant or at least some natural immuno-protection from COVID and from its current variants—particularly if you have also been vaccinated.
5. **Is this variant a threat?** Yes. But to what extent is too early to tell—as case loads, hospitalizations and fatalities tend to lag three weeks behind increases in infections. Regardless, COVID-19 remains a threat to people in [high risk groups](#), including the elderly and the immuno-compromised.

NOTE: There are additional active links in the [Yahoo News article](#) above that connect to additional stories of interest; including concerns about another “COVID wave” and the latest on yet another potential variant emerging overseas—*Deltacron*.

With Available Therapeutics, Speed & Testing is Key.

Pharmaceutical companies have worked diligently on reactive responses and treatments for people who receive a confirmed “positive” Covid test. These include treatments like monoclonal antibodies and convalescent plasma, plus anti-viral drugs like [Remdesivir](#), and two recently FDA-approved oral antivirals for treatment in certain types of patients. (Pfizer’s [Paxlovid](#) and Merck’s [molnupiravir](#).)

But be aware – the effectiveness of these treatments is directly proportional to how fast an individual tests positive for COVID-19 in relation to their first “onset” of symptoms—a window of opportunity to seek direct treatment that is open for about 5 days in all.

You can learn a lot more about the [availability, benefits, and limitations of these treatments in this AP article](#).

** To learn more about current COVID treatments, visit the [Department of Health and Human Services COVID treatment page](#).

Allergies Can Look And Act Like COVID.

So many of us suffer through seasonal allergies, it’s not fair that the most common allergy symptoms can easily be confused with COVID-19 symptoms. Those are the breaks, however.

CBS New York recently shared a segment on the BA.2 variant increase coinciding with the onset of allergy season. [Click here to watch the segment and/or read the accompanying article](#).

The essential takeaway? When in doubt, get tested for COVID.

“... If anti-COVID meds are going to be effective, they need to be taken within 48 to 72 hours of symptom onset. That’s not enough time to wait out your allergies. Your best bet is to take at least one rapid COVID test to distinguish between the virus and pollen allergies.” -- Dr. Max Gomez

** **To the point(s) of all of the above articles**—here are three resources you won’t want to do without:

Free tests: <https://www.covidtests.gov/> Each American household is eligible for 2 sets of (4) free at-home tests – 8 tests in all.

Free masks: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/free-masks.html> Click to use your zip code to find free N-95 masks near you.

Vaccine finder: <https://www.vaccines.gov/> Simple interface helps you find vaccination locations nearest you—and vaccinations remain Free

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