

## PFT COVID Update 7-13-22: BA.5 Variant Emerges - Booster Now or Later - Sobering Statistics - Links

# CORONA VIRUS Updates

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### **BA.5 Variant Emerges As Current Dominant Strain of COVID-19.**

Covid-19 Omicron variant BA.5 now accounts for approximately 65% of all new cases in the United States, according to a recent article from NPR. Cases are on the rise nationwide, as are reinfections and hospitalizations.

This variant is extremely communicable — likely the most we’ve seen to date — however with a population approaching 80 percent with at least one dose of vaccine and 68 percent fully vaccinated, our general reaction has been better on the whole.

While people are again contracting Covid-19 in increased numbers (*including a sizable number of reinfections*), less people are suffering the full brunt of the virus on account of a stronger overall immuno-response across our total population. The unvaccinated remain at a higher risk for hospitalization and severe consequences.

[Click here to read the full NPR Article.](#)

[Click here to see the CDC’s “Monitoring Variant Proportions” tab that updates in real time.](#)

The variants that are emerging now are not more deadly, however they are becoming more “*immuno-evasive*” — learning to navigate around the protection provided by previous infection, vaccination or both.

Keeping up to date with scheduled boosters, as well as using common sense mitigation, masking and distancing when in crowded, indoor environments or around at-risk populations are still proactive steps you can take to reduce your risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.

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## To Booster Or Not To Booster: That Is The Question.

While vaccine makers push forward toward creating updated vaccinations that include specific responsiveness to emerging Omicron variants (*called "bivalent shots" that combine original vaccine with Omicron protection*), there's still work to be done in increasing the number of people who choose a first or even second booster shot.

The question is — should you seek out your scheduled booster now, or try to “*wait it out*” for Omicron-specific boosters targeted for availability in the fall

**The answer is no — don't wait.** If you are eligible for one of the boosters now (*or soon*), then get one now — and anticipate POTENTIALLY needing another booster in the late fall or early winter.

[Click here for another NPR article that explains this in greater detail](#) — the bottom line is, we are currently lagging in our nationwide push for booster shots.

“Only about half of vaccinated Americans have gotten a single booster. And while a second booster that's recommended for people 50 and older again restores protection, only a quarter of those eligible have gotten one.” -- NPR

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## Sobering Statistics And Their Ramifications.

In an 18-month period between 2020 and 2021, **one out of every eight deaths in the United States was a COVID related death.**

It's the kind of statistic you read and have trouble conceptualizing — however the statistics are only part of the story.

[Check out this Pittsburgh Courier story for a look beyond the numbers](#) to how COVID death leaves a uniquely distinctive mark on grieving families — particularly within the specific populations that have been affected most by the virus.

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## 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**

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