

# Health Director: Please get your booster

## Omicron variant to drive expected increase in infections

As concerns about the spread of omicron variant of COVID-19 grow, **Warren County Health Services Director Ginelle Jones** is urging residents who are eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot as soon as possible.

Initial studies show the omicron variant, which is becoming increasingly present in the United States, including downstate New York, is much more transmissible than prior COVID-19 variants. No cases that involved the omicron variant have been documented yet in Warren County, but counties around New York have dealt with recent clusters of omicron cases, and it seems inevitable that this variant will find its way to our region as well.

While there is hope that omicron does not cause as much serious illness as prior variants, the potential volume of omicron variant cases resulting from indoor holiday-related gatherings could overwhelm local hospitals and medical practices that are already overburdened.

“We are concerned that this new variant has the potential to make a lot more people sick, at a time when the delta variant and influenza are also present and have stretched our healthcare system to the limits,” Jones explained.

On a good note, [research is showing that those who have gotten booster shots](#) are better protected from the omicron variant than those who have not.

Warren County Health Services has a booster clinic planned Tuesday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at Warren County Municipal Center. [Find registration links for that clinic here.](#)

In addition, [New York’s mass vaccination site at Aviation Mall](#), local pharmacies and some medical practices are offering booster doses.

As Christmas and New Year’s Eve approach, Warren County Health Services urges residents to avoid gatherings or going to work if ill, and use at-home COVID-19 test kits to screen for illness if planning to attend a gathering. These kits are available at many pharmacies, or can be ordered online.

“We ask that our residents keep these risks in mind as they plan holiday celebrations,” Jones said. “Please understand that we have been seeing more COVID-19 illness involving young people, and more hospitalizations involving young people. We are headed into what may be an additional holiday-related surge of COVID-19, and our healthcare community is working very hard to keep us safe and healthy after 21 months of COVID-19 illness.”