

MARTHA'S VINEYARD BOARDS OF HEALTH
CURRENT COVID-19 INFORMATION

Omicron subvariant BA.5 is the dominant variant currently spreading in the US and seems to be the most contagious version to date. BA.5 is causing more reinfection in people who already had COVID-19, including infections caused by some earlier versions of Omicron. It's also evading immunity from the vaccines, although vaccines are still effective at preventing severe disease and death.

Island towns still have a mask advisory in place. Considering the infectious nature of BA.5 and our CDC classification as a high-risk community the Boards of Health strongly advise individuals to wear a mask when indoors, in enclosed spaces serving the public or when unable to maintain social distance, regardless of vaccination status. Individual businesses also have the right to require mask wearing by their staff and customers. High quality N-95 masks are available at all Island Board of Health offices.

The best way to protect yourself from severe illness is to get vaccinated and get a booster shot if you're eligible. The vaccination bus will be returning to the Island on Sunday, July 31st from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at MV Regional High School. Appointments are required and can be made online at <https://home.color.com/vaccine/register/purpleshield?calendar=823a85ee-a42e-4094-9662-07bf95d18d6e>. Vaccines are also available through [Martha's Vineyard Hospital](#) or Health Imperatives (Family Planning).

For many people who contract COVID-19 symptoms resemble those of a cold. If you begin to experience a fever, cough, sore throat, headache, runny nose or congestion, it's important to get tested right away. An at-home OTC test is a good first option in this situation and test kits are available at all Board of Health offices. If the result is positive, it likely means you have Covid-19. When you have symptoms and an OTC test is positive, there isn't a need to confirm the result with a lab-based test. Please take the time to report your positive result at <https://rapidtestmv.org/>.

If an at-home test is negative, it doesn't necessarily mean you're in the clear. If your symptoms persist or get worse, it's a good idea to take another at-home test after a day or two. If the repeat at-home test is also negative, you should strongly consider getting a lab-based PCR test.

Testing a few days after you have been exposed or potentially exposed to an individual with COVID-19 is also recommended. Again, if you have reason to believe you may be infected but tested negative with an OTC test you should follow up with a lab-based PCR test.

Antiviral medications and monoclonal antibody therapies are available for infected individuals at higher risk of severe disease. If you test positive for COVID-19 and are at higher risk of severe disease because you're an older adult or you have a health condition, reach out to your healthcare provider to see if treatment is advised. The state also provides [free telehealth for COVID-19 treatment with Paxlovid](#) for eligible individuals.