



I Raise the Rates! December Edition

In this edition of I Raise the Rates (IRtR), you will find a variety of new resources from several public health partners, educational opportunities, and a selection of media articles related to immunization.

Updates from the American College of Physicians (ACP)

ACP Partners with YouTube to Launch New Video Series on Public Health Topics



Additional videos are now available as part of ACP's new video series created in partnership with YouTube.

For patients: ACP's new *Ask Your Internist* series is a patient-facing series where physicians answer the public's top questions about vaccines. The first *Ask Your Internist* episode, ["Why Trust COVID-19 Vaccines?"](#) features Dr. Frances Ferguson, an internal medicine physician based in Georgia, who shares her journey from being skeptical about the coronavirus vaccines to

trusting them enough to get vaccinated and recommending the COVID-19 vaccines to her patients.

Additional *Ask Your Internist* episodes include:

- [Flu Vaccines: What You Need to Know \(Q&A\)](#) with Keith Ferdinand, an internist, and cardiologist based in New Orleans
- [Respondiendo a tus preguntas sobre la vacuna contra la gripe](#) with Josune Iglesias, an internist working in Chicago

For clinicians: Physician to Physician Conversations is ACP's new clinician-facing series that shares practical strategies to address vaccine misinformation. The first episode, "[Uncover the Root of COVID-19 Vaccine Concerns](#)" features Dr. Kimberly Manning, an internist based in Atlanta who discusses strategies to get to the root of patient concerns about COVID-19 vaccines by engaging in meaningful conversation.

More videos will be posted to [ACP's YouTube channel](#) in the coming weeks.

[Visit ACP's YouTube Channel Here](#)

Updates From the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)



ACIP met on Thursday, December 16, 2021 to discuss and vote on updated recommendations for the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine.

Presentations included an update to the benefit and risk assessment in the [Evidence to Recommendations Frameworks](#) for the Janssen COVID-19 vaccines. The TTS case reporting rate following Janssen COVID-19 vaccination is higher than previous estimates in a wide range of ages for both men and women. Recent investigations have provided additional evidence for a relationship between Janssen COVID-19 vaccination and TTS and associated severe outcomes. The ACIP has recommended that mRNA

COVID-19 vaccines are preferred over the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19 for patients ≥ 18 years of age.

Omicron Variant: What You Need to Know



On November 24, 2021, a new variant of [SARS-CoV-2](#), B.1.1.529, was reported to the World Health Organization (WHO). This new variant was first detected in specimens collected on November 11, 2021 in Botswana and on November 14, 2021 in South Africa.

On November 26, 2021, WHO named the B.1.1.529 Omicron and classified it as a Variant of Concern (VOC). On November 30, 2021, the United States designated Omicron as a [Variant of Concern](#), and on December 1, 2021 the first confirmed U.S. case of Omicron was identified.

CDC has been collaborating with global public health and industry partners to learn about Omicron, as we continue to monitor its course. CDC has been using [genomic surveillance](#) throughout the course of the pandemic to track variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and informs public health practice. We don't yet know how easily it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, or how well available vaccines and medications work against it.

[Learn More](#)

**Happy Holidays and Happy New Year from the
ACP & NJIN Team!**



From our team to you and your family, we hope you have a wonderful holiday season and a great New Year!

As a general note, ACP and NJIN will both be closed from December 24th through January 3rd.

We look forward to connecting with you all in 2022!

Featured Articles and Resources

COVID-19 Related Updates

FDA Authorizes First Oral Antiviral for Treatment of COVID-19



On December 22nd, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an [emergency use authorization \(EUA\)](#) for Pfizer's Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir tablets and ritonavir tablets, co-packaged for oral use) for the treatment of mild-to-moderate coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in adults and pediatric

patients (12 years of age and older weighing at least 40 kilograms or about 88 pounds) with positive results of direct SARS-CoV-2 testing, and who are at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death. Paxlovid is available by prescription only and should be initiated as soon as possible after a diagnosis of COVID-19 and within five days of symptom onset.

[Read the Full Press Release Here](#)

Moderna says Data Show COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters Fight Omicron Variant



Booster doses of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine significantly increase the number of disease-fighting antibodies against the Omicron variant compared to vaccinated persons who have yet to receive an extra dose, the company announced Monday, December 20th.

Moderna said that according to data, a 50-microgram booster dose increases antibody levels 37-fold and a larger booster dose, 100 micrograms, increases production 83-fold.

The new data is preliminary, the company said, but encouraging -- particularly with the Omicron variant responsible for surges in cases worldwide.

[Read More](#)

Pfizer and BioNTech Provide Update on Omicron Variant



Pfizer and BioNTech recently announced results from an initial laboratory study demonstrating that serum antibodies induced by the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine (BNT162b2) neutralize the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant after three doses. Sera obtained from vaccines one month after receiving the booster vaccination (third dose of BNT162b2 vaccine) neutralized the Omicron variant to levels that are comparable to those observed for the wild-type SARS-CoV-2 spike protein after two doses.

Sera from individuals who received two doses of the current COVID-19 vaccine did exhibit, on average, more than a 25-fold reduction in neutralization titers against the Omicron variant compared to wild-type, indicating that two doses of BNT162b2 may not be sufficient to protect against infection with the Omicron variant. However, as the vast majority of epitopes targeted by vaccine-induced T cells are not affected by the mutations in Omicron, the companies believe that vaccinated individuals may still be protected against severe forms of the disease and are closely monitoring real-world effectiveness against Omicron, globally.

[Read the Full Press Release Here](#)

Flu Vaccine Rates Lowest for People Without Regular Healthcare Provider



Vaccination rates for the flu are low at 44.5% among individuals who have a regular healthcare provider but are still more than twice as high as for those without healthcare providers (20.5%), according to research presented at the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists' (ASHP) virtual 2021 Midyear Clinical Meeting & Exhibition.

"This research reminds us that under-vaccination and vaccine hesitancy is not limited to COVID-19," said Sinmileoluwa Okegbile, a Pharm.D. candidate at Midwestern University in Arizona and researcher on the study. "Low vaccination rates for the flu persist among those living in the United States even though vaccines can prevent severe illnesses, hospitalization, and death. Our study suggests a need for a fresh approach to counteract hesitancy."

[Read More](#)

Adult Vaccine Related Articles and Resources

New Hepatitis B Vaccination Recommendations Praised Amid Low Awareness



An updated recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) calling for universal hepatitis B vaccination of all adults aged 19 and younger has boosted the call to improve clinicians' awareness of the increasing infection and low vaccination rates — and raise the issue with patients.

"This new recommendation from [the] ACIP will be instrumental [in] raising adult hepatitis B vaccination rates in the US to levels that will allow us to finally eliminate hepatitis B in this country," said Rita K. Kuwahara, MD, a primary care internal medicine physician and health policy fellow at Georgetown

University, in Washington, DC, in addressing the issue at the US Conference on HIV/AIDS (USCHA) this month.

[Read More](#)

CDC Digital Media Toolkit: 2021-22 Flu Season



CDC's seasonal flu vaccination campaign materials are available to assist partners in communicating about the importance of vaccination. This digital toolkit includes details on events/activities, sample social media and newsletter content, graphics, web assets, and media prep material. This material is downloadable, shareable, and some of the material is customizable.

[Access the Resources Here](#)

Communicating the Benefits of Influenza Vaccine During COVID-19

**immunization
action coalition**



immunize.org

COVID-19's emergence has increased the need and strengthened the recommendation for all who are eligible to receive their seasonal flu immunization. The Immunization Action Coalition has put together a brief one-pager for clinical providers, focusing on how to communicate the importance of the flu vaccine during the COVID-19 pandemic to your patients, family, and friends.

[Access the One Pager Here](#)