

COMMUNITY COVID-19 Q&A

OTTAWA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



*mi*Ottawa Department of
Public Health

[miOttawa.org/miHealth](https://miottawa.org/miHealth)

Q 1 **WHY ISN'T THE PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT STAYING TO ANSWER COMMUNITY CONCERNS AT THE OTTAWA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING?**

We hear every one of you. The Board of Commissioners (BOC) and Ottawa County Department of Public Health (OCDPH) are listening to your comments, questions, and concerns.

Generally, public comment at a BOC meeting is intended to allow members of the community to address the board on issues of public concern. The BOC is responsible to be present and listen to community concerns and relay the information back to the OCDPH.

The BOC and OCDPH review the public comments and apply the concerns to make the necessary changes to our communication strategies and health practices.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S ROLE

The OCDPH's role is to inform the public of ongoing public health concerns. We are invested in our community's health and the challenges that COVID-19 has brought. We understand your concerns and are working with the BOC and community partners to gather the information needed to answer your questions. We have a whole department of public health officials who are dedicated public servants. They are focused on the COVID-19 efforts and have been working continuously to inform and provide necessary information to the public.

During the intense demand of the pandemic and our limited resources, it is crucial for the health officer and deputy health officer to use their time wisely to oversee the public health department's COVID-19 response; as well as other responsibilities of the department including sexual health, childhood and travel immunizations, communicable disease response, tuberculosis, food safety inspections and so much more. Therefore, our health officers are unable to stay during the entire BOC meetings. However, the commissioners are there to listen and relay your concerns to the OCDPH so we can address them together.

Q 2**ARE THERE MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS FROM WEARING MASKS AND QUARANTINING?**

We have yet to gauge whether wearing masks and quarantining has affected a person's overall mental health. Local data are being collected to understand how the pandemic as a whole may have contributed to any adverse mental health outcomes for adults and children in our community. Previous Ottawa County Community Health Needs Assessments identified mental health as one of the top health priorities in the community before the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a topic of great concern related to all age demographics and has been widely discussed among leaders in all sectors, as seen in the [Ottawa County Health Improvement Plans](#). Data has shown changes in mental health long before the COVID-19 pandemic in youth and adult populations. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated or contributed even more to poor mental health outcomes.

OTTAWA COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

The OCDPH published a news release addressing mental health concerns in support of May's Mental Health Awareness month. To view the news release and its resources visit <https://bit.ly/34NMRSx>.

[Community Mental Health of Ottawa County](#) states, taking care of your mental health needs is very important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people are feeling anxious, scared, stressed out and angry. Kids might feel confused and disoriented because of changes in their routine. Parents are feeling overwhelmed. Social distancing can cause people to feel lonely and disconnected. There are many resources available in Ottawa County to help individuals and families get through these tough times. Most of these services are available through telehealth or online. Telehealth means services, such as counseling or case management, are provided by phone, email or virtual meetings instead of face to face.

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, please contact Ottawa County Community Mental Health Crisis Line: 866-512-4357.
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Chat: <https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.
Crisis Text Line: Text START to 741-741.



Q 3

ARE THERE TOXIC CHEMICALS IN THE COVID-19 TESTING MATERIALS?



No, the antigen tests do **not contain** toxic materials.



The antigen tests are safe. The COVID-19 antigen tests are rigorously tested and are safe to use on a regular basis. Ethylene oxide is widely used to sterilize medical equipment, including COVID-19 testing kits. The sterilization process is tightly controlled to ensure residue left over is negligible, and to ensure medical devices are safe to use. While chronic inhalation or occupational exposure to ethylene oxide has been linked to certain health concerns, low levels of exposure to ethylene oxide gas via medical equipment sterilization have not been shown to result in significant adverse health risks. [LEARN MORE](#)

RESOURCES

More information about ethylene oxide sterilization can be found at:

- [U.S Food and Drug Administration: Ethylene Oxide Sterilization for Medical Devices - FDA](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [U.S Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#)

For recent reporting:

- [False cancer claim circulates around COVID test](#)
- [Fact check - Lateral flow tests do not cause cancer](#)



Q 4

ARE THE COVID-19 TESTS RELIABLE? ARE THERE FALSE POSITIVE TESTS?

The majority of COVID-19 tests are reliable and crucial in identifying exposures and infections of COVID-19.

In May 2020, the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) issued the first Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for a COVID-19 antigen test. The antigen tests quickly detect fragments of proteins found on or within the virus by testing samples collected from the nasal cavity using swabs. In general, antigen tests are not as sensitive as molecular tests. Like molecular tests, antigen tests are typically highly specific for the SARS-CoV-2 virus. However, all diagnostic tests may be subject to false-positive tests, especially in low prevalence settings.

The FDA is aware of reports of false-positive results associated with antigen tests. The FDA is providing recommendations to healthcare professionals to minimize the possibility of false-positive tests from the SARS-CoV-2 antigen tests. The FDA is continuing to work with other agencies, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to safeguard COVID test use in nursing homes and other settings. The FDA is also working with test manufacturers to ensure that their instructions for use are as clear as possible to minimize the occurrence of false results.

[LEARN MORE](#)

WHO SHOULD GET TESTED FOR CURRENT INFECTION

[CDC](#) recommends that anyone with any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 get tested, regardless of vaccination status or prior infection. If you tested because you have symptoms or were potentially exposed to the virus, you should stay away from others while test results are pending and follow the advice of your health care provider or public health professional.

A COVID-19 test is recommended for...

- People who are experiencing [symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- People who have had close contact (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone with confirmed COVID-19.
 - Fully vaccinated people with no COVID-19 symptoms do not need to be tested following an exposure to someone with COVID-19.
 - People who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not need to get tested following an exposure as long as they do not develop new symptoms.
- People who have taken part in activities that put them at higher risk for COVID-19 because they cannot physically distance as needed to avoid exposure, such as travel, attending large social or mass gatherings, or being in crowded or poorly-ventilated indoor settings.
- People who have been asked or referred to get tested by their healthcare provider, or state, tribal, local, or territorial health department.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Q 5 WHY DO KIDS HAVE TO GET VACCINATED IF THEY AREN'T AT HIGH RISK FOR THE COVID-19 VIRUS?

Older adults are at a higher risk of dying or contracting serious complications from COVID-19, compared to young kids. However, kids can still contract the virus and spread it to others. As of May 27, 2021, nearly 4 million children have tested positive for COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic. [LEARN MORE](#) - Since mid-May 2020, CDC has been tracking case reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), a rare but serious condition associated with COVID-19. CDC is working to learn more about why some children and adolescents develop MIS-C after having COVID-19 or contact with someone with COVID-19, while others do not. As of mid-June 2021, more than 4 thousand kids have been diagnosed with MIS-C across the U.S. [LEARN MORE](#)

At least 297 children have died of COVID-19, about 0.06% of all deaths. About 0.01% of children diagnosed with COVID-19 have died. At least 14,849 children have been hospitalized, about 2% of all hospitalizations. Roughly 0.8% of children with COVID-19 have been hospitalized. [LEARN MORE](#)

At this time, it still appears that severe illness due to COVID-19 is rare among children. However, there is an urgent need to collect more data on the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on children, including ways the virus may harm the long-term physical health of infected children, as well as its emotional and mental health effects.

VACCINATING KIDS

COVID-19 does not pose a major risk for kids compared to adults. However, we do know kids are testing positive and some have died from the virus. Kids are a vector in the spread of COVID-19. Kids can be infected with the virus, get sick and spread COVID-19 to others. [LEARN MORE](#)

CDC recommends that kids 12 and older, who are eligible for the two-dose Pfizer vaccine, should get vaccinated to protect themselves against COVID-19 and stop the spread of the virus. We do not know the long-term effects of the virus on children. Getting vaccinated is a critical tool to prevent and protect kids from getting sick with COVID-19. [LEARN MORE](#)

CDC has received rare reports of myocarditis and pericarditis in adolescents and young adults after COVID-19 vaccination. The known and potential benefits of COVID-19 vaccination outweigh the known and potential risks, including the possible risk of myocarditis or pericarditis. The CDC continues to recommend COVID-19 vaccination for individuals 12 years of age and older and continues to monitor vaccine safety.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Q 6

ARE THE COVID-19 VACCINES SAFE FOR OUR CHILDREN?

Yes, it is safe for your kids to get the COVID-19 vaccine. According to the [CDC](#), studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Like adults, children may have some minor side effects after the COVID-19 vaccination. These side effects only last a few days and your child will not get the COVID-19 virus from any of the COVID-19 vaccines.

The COVID-19 vaccines have been used under the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history, including studies in children 12 years and older.

Getting vaccinated is an important tool to help stop the pandemic. Children 12 years and older are now eligible to get the two-dose Pfizer vaccine. The Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are available to individuals ages 18 years or older.

FINDING A COVID-19 VACCINE

- Check your local pharmacy's website to see if vaccination walk-ins or appointments are available.
- Check with your child's healthcare provider about whether they offer COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Search [vaccines.gov](#), text your ZIP code to 438829 or call 1-800-232-0233 to find locations near you.
- Visit [vaccinatewestmi.com/clinics](#) to find a local clinic in your county.

If you're looking for vaccine information to help people who may have limited or no internet access, please call the Michigan COVID-19 hotline at 888-535-6136, or 2-1-1.



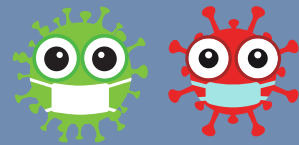
Q 7 ARE VACCINES GOING TO BE MANDATED? WON'T THAT TAKE AWAY OUR PERSONAL CHOICE?

- The federal government does not mandate (require) vaccinations for people. The state government or an employer, for example, can require or mandate COVID-19 vaccination. At this time, the vaccine is not mandated.

If vaccines eventually become mandated for children in schools, parents have the personal choice to opt their children out of getting the COVID-19 vaccine before school. [LEARN MORE](#)

However, vaccines have been proven to be safe and effective and experts believe getting the vaccine is the best tool to end the pandemic. To learn more visit www.cdc.gov/covidvaccines.

IMMUNIZATION WAIVER INFORMATION



In December 2014, the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules approved a new [educational requirement](#) for Michigan parents opting their children out of getting vaccinated before entering school.

Parents/guardians have the opportunity to speak with a health educator from their local health department about their concerns and questions prior to the nonmedical waiver being signed.

Any parent/guardian who wants to claim a nonmedical waiver will need to receive education regarding the benefits of vaccination and the risks of disease. The new rule requires the use of the State of Michigan nonmedical waiver form dated January 10, 2021. [LEARN MORE](#)

To find more information with Ottawa County visit www.miOttawa.org/Immunize

Q 8 HOW DO WE PROTECT OURSELVES FROM THE COVID-19 VARIANTS?

Viruses change through mutation causing variants of the original virus. New variants of a virus are common and expected. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been detected in the United States and around the world.

Currently, there are six variants of concern in the United States:

- B.1.1.7 (Alpha)- This variant was first detected in the United States in December 2020. It was initially detected in the United Kingdom.
- P.1 (Gamma)- This variant was first detected in the United States in January 2021. P.1 was initially detected in South Africa in December 2020.
- B.1.427 and B.1.429 (Epsilon)- These two variants were first identified in California in February 2021.
- B.1.617.2 (Delta)- This variant was first detected in the United States in March 2021. It was initially identified in India in December 2020.

VARIANT PROTECTION

Scientists are monitoring these variants, including the spikes on the surface of the virus. They are working to learn more about how easily they spread and whether they cause severe illness. So far, studies suggest that the current authorized vaccines work on the circulating variants. Scientists will continue to study these and other variants. Public health does not direct strategies or treatments for the clinical care of diseases. It is the FDA's job is to carefully evaluate the scientific data on a drug to be sure that it is both safe and effective for a particular use, and then decide whether or not to approve it. Using any treatment for COVID-19 that's not approved or authorized by the FDA, unless part of a clinical trial, can cause serious harm.

To find more information visit <https://bit.ly/3gYfGSY>.

Q 9**CAN HEALTH DEPARTMENTS ISSUE ORDERS IF IT'S NOT A STATE OF EMERGENCY?**

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and local health departments have the authority and the responsibility to respond to cases and outbreaks of notifiable diseases under the Michigan Public Health Code (P.A. 368 of 1978) and a formal declaration of a state of emergency is not necessary for the execution of their duties.

Visit <https://bit.ly/2VtTxUQ> for more information.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES IF PEOPLE DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE ORDERS?

Michigan law allows local health departments to respond to noncompliance with rules, regulations and orders in a variety of ways, depending on the scope and severity of the violation.

