



Public Health Division

County of Santa Cruz

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BAY AREA HEALTH OFFICERS URGE PUBLIC TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS AS COVID LEVELS RISE

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, California -- Twelve Bay Area health officers are stressing the importance of taking safety precautions, including continued masking indoors, as the region experiences a new swell of COVID cases and hospitalizations.

The Bay Area now has California's highest COVID infection rates. The current wave is fueled by highly contagious Omicron subvariants. Bay Area counties are seeing increases in reported cases, levels of virus in sewer sheds, and hospitalizations. Actual case rates are higher than those reported because of widespread use of home tests.

These health officers reiterate their continued, strong support for people to mask up indoors, keep tests handy, and ensure they are up to date on vaccinations by getting boosters when eligible.

"There's a lot of COVID out there right now, so it's time to take more precautionary measures to protect yourself and your loved ones," Santa Cruz County Health Officer Gail Newel said.

The grim milestone of [1 million deaths from COVID](#) in the United States underscores the need for continued vigilance against the virus. Although not required, [masking is strongly recommended by the California Department of Public Health](#) for most public indoor settings, and health officials say wearing higher-quality masks (N95/KN95 or snug-fitting surgical masks) indoors is a wise choice that will help people protect their health. Vaccines remain the best protection against severe disease and death from COVID.

Health officials say people should also stay home if they feel sick and get tested right away. Officials also encourage getting tested after potential exposure and limiting large gatherings to well ventilated spaces or outdoors. For people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19 infection, medications are available that can reduce your chances of severe illness and death. Talk with your healthcare provider right away if you test positive.

The above statement has been endorsed by health officers from the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Sonoma as well as the City of Berkeley.