

Pandemic (United States): Statement on Potential BA.2 Surge and Recommended Precautionary Policy Proposals

Monday 11 April 2022, by [The People's CDC](#) (Date first published: 23 March 2022).

The new CDC guidelines relax the criteria for concern about COVID-19 [1] risk and permit a decrease in public health protective mandates. The People's CDC is issuing a reminder that we are still in a pandemic for which precautionary measures remain critical. Preventive measures to help protect you and those around you, such as indoor masking and avoidance of crowded indoor venues, remain prudent in much of the US [2]. Getting vaccinated and boosted continues to prevent many hospitalizations and deaths [3] [4]. This is especially important if you are at greater risk of getting very sick from COVID or if you are in contact with vulnerable people [5], including the elderly; cancer patients and survivors; the chronically ill; those overweight or obese; the pregnant; the immunocompromised; smokers; and the unvaccinated, which includes kids under 5.

Following the record high transmissions seen in January and February, for the past week the US has averaged approximately 30,000 new cases daily [6]. We continue to see an astonishing average of 1,000 daily COVID deaths [7].

With the relaxed CDC criteria, a flood of American optimism, corporate pressure to get back to business as usual, well-funded campaigns of misinformation and disinformation [8], and a public that has been misled to believe that disappearing mandates mean minimal risk, we fear the US has become unnecessarily vulnerable to a new surge. We urge you to continue using protective measures [9] to help control the spread of COVID or, if you have stopped, resume using them.

Further, the People's CDC calls for the US CDC to improve COVID-19 surveillance and bolster efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We insist that Congress immediately pass the \$20 billion supplemental COVID supply bill [10] for vaccinations, masks, tests, treatments and public health department support. We implore state and local governments to intensify efforts to expand vaccination and booster access and uptake, and make quality masks as well as home testing and post diagnosis treatments equitably accessible. The People's CDC contends it is not too late for all levels of government to work together to hire, educate, and mobilize significant community worker forces in local health departments to educate, vaccinate, and supply underserved communities and staff skilled nursing facilities and other congregate living institutions so that we will all be better prepared for the next surge.

Several, Asian, African, and European countries are showing signs of a new surge [11]. The main causes appear to be gaps in immune protection (from a mixture of factors such as undervaccination, waning vaccine effectiveness [12], and declining use of protective measures [13] [14] [15]) and an even more contagious version of Omicron, known as BA.2 [16].

In the US BA.2 already accounted for approximately 23% of newly diagnosed cases as of March 12 and increased to nearly 35% of cases by March 18 [17]. Nearly 40% of US wastewater surveillance sites have shown increasing amounts of virus in the past 15 days [18]. Given these indicators, there

is a significant possibility of a new surge of infections in the United States in the coming weeks. Now is the time to take preventive measures to help avoid another surge in the US.

The People's CDC

- 1 <https://peoplescdc.org/2022/03/04/statement-report-on-us-cdc-covid-19-guidelines/>
 - 2 <https://peoplescdc.org/2022/03/11/covid-19-weather-report/>
 - 3 <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7104e3.htm>
 - 4 <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2788487>
 - 5 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>
 - 6 https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_dailycases (Accessed March 23, 2022)
 - 7 https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_dailydeaths (Accessed March 23, 2022)
 - 8 How Dark Money Shaped The School Safety Debate (levernews.com)
 - 9 See the protective measures we recommend you use as layers of protection at <https://peoplescdc.org/2022/03/11/covid-19-weather-report/>
 - 10 Impasse Over New Covid Relief Aid, Neither Side Is Willing to Bend, NY Times, March 15, 2022
 - 11 Weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 – 15 March 2022 (who.int)
 - 12 <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7107e2.htm>
 - 13 <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/19/health/covid-ba2-surge-variant.html>
 - 14 <https://www.vox.com/22977354/covid-19-outbreak-omicron-ba2-hong-kong-south-korea-china-asia-vaccine>
 - 15 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/22/rising-covid-cases-europe-curbs-lifted-too-soon-world-health-organisation>
 - 16 <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-02-2022-statement-on-omicron-sublineage-ba.2>
 - 17 CDC COVID Data Tracker, Variant Proportions, NOWCAST for week ending March 12, 2022. Accessed March 23, 2022.
 - 18 <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#wastewater-surveillance> Accessed March 23, 2022
- Published March 23, 2022:
<https://peoplescdc.org/2022/03/23/peoples-cdc-statement-on-potential-ba-2-surge-and-recommended-precautionary-policy-proposals/>
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People's CDC Statement on the US CDC's Change to COVID-19 Guidelines

On February 25th, 2022, the CDC released updated COVID-19 guidelines that are heavily focused on individual actions as opposed to community-level policies. The CDC's new guidelines are at odds with the fundamental tenets of equitable public health practice.

The updated recommendations don't align with the best science if the goal is to prevent infection, and suffering – from illness (including long COVID) and potentially death, and from all the associated costs of coping with COVID. The CDC is telling us that we, as individuals, can afford to bear those costs. And it's telling us that the institutions that should be helping us – our government, our workplaces, and others – can't afford to help us.

The people who can least afford to pay, will pay the highest cost: The new guidelines ignore the wellbeing of those most vulnerable communities who have been most affected by COVID, including the immunocompromised and disabled, the pregnant, those with lower incomes, those working in higher-risk jobs, indigenous, Black, Latinx communities, the unvaccinated, including children, the elderly, diabetics, and others with chronic diseases. The new guidance further shifts the burden of responsibility onto vulnerable people to fend for themselves, and to make difficult, constantly changing risk assessments.

These recommendations do the political work of trying to convince the public that this pandemic is over. They suggest we accept that there was no way for us to avoid the nearly one million dead in the US so far. They suggest there is nothing more we can do than to let this virus spread. They suggest that those without chronic illness and disability can live a “normal” life with COVID in the air, while those with health concerns need to be pushed inside.

We reject ineffectual public health policies based on individualistic approaches to pandemic management. The People’s CDC advocates for a layered, collective, and equitable pandemic approach at all levels that would prevent infection spread and protect the most vulnerable among us.

Read Our Full Report on the US CDC’s Change to COVID-19 Guidelines

- Published March 4, 2022:
[ps://peoplescdc.org/2022/03/04/statement-report-on-us-cdc-covid-19-guidelines/](https://peoplescdc.org/2022/03/04/statement-report-on-us-cdc-covid-19-guidelines/)
