

December 9 , 2022

**To Our Valued Clients and Partners,**

**News Flash!** [The FDA announced yesterday, December 8th, 2022](#), that it has expanded its Emergency Use Authorization of two COVID-19 updated (bivalent) vaccines available for use in children down to 6 months of age. We expect that the CDC will update its vaccine and booster recommendations soon to include the new FDA EUAs.

With the surge in RSV and influenza cases, it's especially concerning that COVID-19 updated (bivalent) booster rates are lagging. Across ID, OR, UT, and WA, the percent of people of 5 years of age that have a current booster ranges from 11.1% in UT to 20.4% in WA. Bivalent boosters became widely available for people 12 years of age and older in September and for people aged 5 – 11 in October of this year.

Current CDC eligibility for the bivalent boosters is recommended for individuals 5 years of age and older whose last monovalent booster was at least two months prior. Pharmacies and health systems across the U.S. are stocked and ready to administer the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, Bivalent authorized for use as a single booster dose.

The CDC's reported U.S. weekly new COVID-19 case count as of November 9th is at 303K new cases per week, which is up 4.8% from 289K new cases per week one month ago and is just shy of half the 614K new cases reported per week one year ago. For more details, please visit the [CDC COVID Data Tracker: Compare Trends Across States and Regions](#)

As we have seen over the last year, new COVID-19 variants are again emerging and increasing in proportion each week. The latest variants to rise over the last month are BQ.1 and BQ.1.1. Collectively, these three variants have grown from less than 1% of reported cases from the week ending September 9th to 9.7% cases reported for the week ending October 8th, to 44.3% of cases for the week ending November 5th, to 62.8% of cases for the week ending December 3rd.

When in doubt, test. It's up to all of us to stay safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses. Home COVID-19 tests kits are readily available through most major pharmacies and in Washington State residents may order additional free COVID-19 home test kits from the WA Department of Health's "[Say Yes, COVID Test](#)" Program. Additionally, throughout the national COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, health plans must continue to cover up to eight COVID-19 home tests each month for each plan member. Illegitimate dorms, sports, and activities for the Fall term, U.S. health officials are bracing for a COVID and flu surge this fall as they monitor the worst flu outbreak in five years in the southern hemisphere. The good news is that the flu

vaccine has been updated for 2022-23 to cover four flu strains and [the CDC advises that it is safe](#) to get at the same time as the new COVID booster vaccine.

The CDC's reported 7-day average U.S. daily new COVID-19 case count as of September 13th is at 60.6K new cases per day, which is down from 103K new cases per day one month ago and is 87K new cases per day under where it was one year ago.

While the federal program at [COVID.gov/tests](#) for ordering free at-home test kits through the mail was suspended on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, Washington State residents may order additional free COVID home test kits from the WA Department of Health's "[Say Yes, COVID Test](#)" program. Additionally, throughout the national COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, health plans must continue to cover up to eight COVID home tests each month for each plan member.

## **We're Here for You**

Thank you for your continued trust in our organization.

Please reach out to your Account Manager if you have any questions or if there is anything we can do to help. We would also love to hear your feedback on future content and story ideas for this newsletter. Please feel free to drop your Account Manager your ideas and feedback.

Best Regards,

**Lindsay Harris, MPP** *President and CEO*

**Regence Group Administrators**