

**August 27, 2023**

**COVID LEVELS ARE LOW AND RISING MODESTLY NATIONALLY. WE ARE NOT SEEING A SIGNIFICANT SURGE OF CONCERN AT THIS TIME. THERE IS NOTHING CURRENTLY THAT COMPARES TO THE PREVIOUS SURGES.**

**XBB1 IS THE COMMON SUB-TYPE AND BA.2.86, IS A RISING VARIANT, BUT IT'S SIGNIFICANCE IS MODEST AT THIS TIME. THE TALK OF INCREASE IS REAL, BUT NUMBERS REMAIN LOW COMPARED TO PREVIOUS PEAKS. WORRY FACTOR IS LOW BUT WE ARE MONITORING AND WILL ADVISE IF THIS NEW VARIANT CHANGES ANY RECOMMENDATIONS.**

**WE CONTINUE TO SEE COVID PRIMARILY IN TRAVELERS AND IN PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT HAVE COVID YET WHO ARE EXPOSED TO RECENT TRAVELERS. CONSIDER BOOSTING 2 WEEKS OR MORE PRIOR TO TRAVEL.... AND MASKING DURING TRAVEL WILL KEEP YOUR TRIP COVID-FREE.**

**TIMING OF VACCINATIONS THIS FALL AND WINTER:**

- FLU SHOT
- COVID SHOT
- RSV SHOT

**DO NOT GET ALL SHOTS AT THE SAME TIME. IF YOU WISH, YOU CAN GET FLU AND COVID AT THE SAME TIME. THAT IS PROVEN SAFE AND EFFECTIVE.**

**IF YOU ARE GETTING MULTIPLE SHOTS, PLEASE GIVE 2 WEEKS BETWEEN SHOTS**

**FLU SHOT:**

**WHO SHOULD GET IT: RECOMMEND IT FOR EVERYONE OVER 65 AND FOR ANYONE OF ANY AGE WHO DOES NOT WANT TO GET THE FLU.**

**TIMING: ANYTIME FROM MID-SEPTEMBER ONWARD IS BEST. FLU SEASON WAS EARLY LAST YEAR, BUT TYPICALLY BEGINS IN EARNEST AROUND THANKSGIVING IN ARIZONA. IT TAKES 2-3 WEEKS FOR THE FLU SHOT TO BE FULLY EFFECTIVE.**

**COVID SHOT:**

**UPCOMING AND CURRENT COVID SHOT VERSION:**

**THE NEW COVID VACCINE FOR XBB1, THE DOMINANT VARIANT, IS NOT OUT YET. IT WILL BE AVAILABLE, WE ARE TOLD, IN OCTOBER. IN THE MEANTIME, THE BIVALENT COVID VACCINE IS AVAILABLE.**

**WHO SHOULD GET IT:**

**IF YOU HAVE NOT HAD COVID YET AND ARE OVER 65, I RECOMMEND YOU STAY CURRENT WITH THE LATEST VERSION OF THE VACCINE. GET THE LATEST VACCINE WHEN AVAILABLE.**

**IF YOU HAVE HAD COVID, YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL PROTECTION AGAINST FUTURE INFECTION, BUT IS NOT A GUARANTEE.**

**I WOULD MAKE SURE YOU HAVE HAD A COVID SHOT DURING THE 2023 CALENDAR YEAR FOR THOSE OVER 65 WHO HAVE ADDITIONAL RISK DUE TO HEALTH ISSUES SUCH AS: ACTIVELY TREATED HEART FAILURE, LUNG DISEASE, OR DIABETES.**

**WHEN TO GET THE COVID VACCINE:**

**I RECOMMEND WAITING UNTIL THE NEW VERSION IS AVAILABLE.**

**(EXCEPTIONS ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT HAD COVID INFECTION YET AND WHO WERE NOT VACCINATED ANYTIME THIS YEAR.....AND THOSE WHO ARE TRAVELING EXTENSIVELY. YOU CAN GET THE CURRENT VERSION.**

**RSV VACCINE:  
THIS IS A NEW VACCINE THAT IS AVAILABLE FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR.**

**THERE ARE TWO VERSIONS, BOTH SIMILAR, AND THERE IS NO SPECIFIC REASON TO CHOOSE ONE OVER THE OTHER (ONE IS GSK..MAKERS OF SHINGRIX, THE OTHER IF PFIZER...MAKERS OF THE COVID VACCINE)**

**GETTING THE VACCINE THIS YEAR IS ELECTIVE. I AM NOT BROADLY RECOMMENDING IT. SEE BELOW FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS.**

I DO NOT RECOMMEND IT FOR EVERYONE DURING THIS FIRST CALENDAR YEAR OF AVAILABILITY.

I DO THINK PEOPLE AT HIGHER RISK SHOULD CONSIDER GETTING THE RSV VACCINE THIS YEAR IF THEY ARE INCLINED...BUT DON'T FEEL OBLIGATED.

FOR THOSE OVER 65 WHO HAVE ADDITIONAL RISK FOR SERIOUS ILLNESS AS A RESULT OF HEALTH ISSUES SUCH AS: ACTIVELY TREATED HEART FAILURE, CANCER, LUNG DISEASE, OR DIABETES.

WHEN TO GET RSV VACCINE: GET IT ANYTIME...STARTING NOW...THROUGH THE FEBRUARY.

WEST NILE SEASON IS STILL HERE. USE PROTECTION. IF WE HEAR OF NEW CASES...WILL REPORT TO YOU. NOT CURRENTLY HIGH LEVEL IN TOWN, BUT NOW IS THE TIME.

BY THE TIME WE SEE THE INCREASE WE WILL BE RUNNING BEHIND.... SO BEGIN NOW.

PLEASE USE MOSQUITO REPELLENT DAILY UNTIL THE END OF SEPTEMBER, OR AT LEAST WHEN IN HIGH EXPOSURE SITUATIONS.

ARIZONA IS THE PRIME USA LOCATION FOR WEST NILE DUE TO HIGH WEST NILE VIRUS LEVELS IN RAPTOR BIRDS WHO ARE IMMUNE TO WEST NILE ILLNESS, BUT NOT IMMUNE TO CARRYING THE VIRUS.

THIS CAN RESULT IN ARIZONA MOSQUITOS WITH PARTICULARLY HIGH VIRUS LEVELS WHEN THEY BITE.

## **COVID:**

**THE 4<sup>TH</sup> COVID BOOSTER IS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE OVER 65 OR THOSE WHO ARE YOUNGER AND HAVE COMPROMISED IMMUNE SYSTEMS. THIS IS A BIVALENT VACCINE WITH THE ORIGINAL COVID VIRUS & OMICRON VARIANT.**

**A NEW BOOSTER WILL BE AVAILABLE IN OCTOBER. IT WILL CONTAIN THE CURRENT VARIANT XBB.1.5, WHICH IS 99% OF THE COVID IN THE USA.**

**CONSIDER GETTING AN ADDITIONAL BOOSTER NOW IF:**

**YOU ARE OVER 65 AND HAVE NOT HAD COVID**

**YOU ARE AT HIGHER RISK DUE TO ILLNESS/MEDICATION (ANY AGE) AND HAVE NOT HAD COVID.**

**IF YOU HAVE HAD COVID OVER 4 MONTHS AGO AND WISH TO BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY.**

**YOU ARE TRAVELING EXTENSIVELY IN THE NEXT 6 MONTHS OR ARE GOING TO LARGE FAMILY EVENTS.**

**IF YOU HAVE NOT HAD COVID AND NOT HAD 5 SHOTS....AND ARE OVER 65...THE DATA IS COMPELLING THAT ADDITIONAL SHOTS WILL KEEP YOU OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS.**

**IF GOOD VENTILATION, OPEN SPACES....NO NEED TO MASK AS A GENERAL RULE.**

**CONSIDER WEARING A GOOD MASK (KN95 OR N95) SELECTIVELY AT BUSY INDOOR LOCATIONS TO STAY HEALTHY ...ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE NOT HAD COVID. LIVE YOUR LIFE AND GO OUT AND ABOUT AS YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE..... AND YOU SHOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE DOING SO.**

**HOW TO MANAGE AT THIS TIME FOR GATHERINGS:**

**PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE COMFORTABLE GETTING TOGETHER AND THEY SHOULD GET TOGETHER.**

**TO REDUCE RISK....HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO CONSIDER:**

**GET YOUR COVID BOOSTER**

**DO NOT ATTEND GATHERINGS IF YOU ARE NOT FEELING WELL. ASK OTHERS NOT TO ATTEND IF THEY ARE NOT FEELING WELL.**

**KEEP AIR MOVING IN GATHERING AREAS. VENTILATION...BY NATURAL MEANS OUTDOORS OR WITH FANS, CAN BE HELPFUL.**

**WEARING A HIGH-QUALITY MASK AT GATHERINGS IS GOOD IF YOU ARE TRAVELING AND WISH TO AVOID INFECTION FOR SUMMER TRAVEL. IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR THOSE WITH TRULY REDUCED IMMUNITY...THOSE RECEIVING CHEMOTHERAPY, THOSE WITH SEVERE LUNG DISEASE, AND THOSE RECOVERING FROM RECENT HOSPITALIZATION.**

## **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**WEAR N-95 OR KN95 MASKS IN SITUATIONS THAT YOU FEEL ARE HIGHER EXPOSURE IF YOU WISH TO REDUCE YOUR RISK**

**WHEN GOING OUT TO ACTIVITIES.... SELECT OPTIONS THAT ALLOW FOR BETTER VENTILATION INSIDE, OR CHOOSE OUTSIDE OPTIONS**

**IF YOU GET SICK YOU NEED TO TEST FOR COVID. CONSIDER COMING INTO THE OFFICE PARKING LOT FOR FLU TESTING AS WELL**

**TREATMENT FOR COVID AND FOR FLU IS AVAILABLE AND WORTHWHILE IN MANY INSTANCES.**

**TREATMENT FOR RSV IS PURELY SYMPTOMATIC.... WE TREAT THE SYMPTOMS AS THERE IS NO ANTIVIRAL FOR RSV**

**COVID IS UNDER CONTROL ON A BROAD BASIS RISKS OF COMPLICATIONS ARE LOW FOR THE MULTI-VAXXED**

## **BOOSTER COVID VACCINATIONS:**

**THE NEW COVID VACCINE IS BIVALENT.... THIS MEANS IT CONTAINS THE ORIGINAL VACCINE COVERAGE.... PLUS, COVERAGE MORE SPECIFICALLY FOR BA5 FORMS OF COVID.**

**GIVEN THE SAFETY OF THE VACCINE, IT IS BEST FOR EVERY ADULT TO CONSIDER THIS BOOSTER...BUT....**

**I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THE BOOSTER VACCINE IF:**

**YOU HAVE NOT HAD COVID AND ARE OVER 65 YEARS OLD**

**YOU HAVE NOT HAD COVID AND HAVE HEALTH ISSUES THAT MAKE YOU MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO COVID COMPLICATIONS SUCH AS.... EMPHYSEMA, SIGNIFICANT DIABETES, HEART FAILURE, OR ARE ON IMMUNE SUPPRESSING MEDICATION.**

**IF YOU HAD COVID YOU CAN STILL BENEFIT FROM ANOTHER BOOSTER, BUT IT IS NOT AS ESSENTIAL, AS YOUR PREVIOUS COVID INFECTION DOES HELP BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY THROUGH NATURAL MEANS.**

**IF YOU HAVE HAD 5 COVID VACCINES, THE 6<sup>TH</sup> VACCINE IS NOT AS ESSENTIAL, BUT IT WILL PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PROTECTION AND IS WORTH STRONGLY CONSIDERING.**

**REMEMBER, IF YOU GET COVID WE CAN ALWAYS TREAT YOU WITH PAXLOVID PILLS, THEY ARE EFFECTIVE.**

**GET YOUR COVID BOOSTER AND GET YOUR FLU BOOSTER**

**COVID BOOSTER IS FULLY EFFECTIVE IN 1 WEEK  
FLU IS FULLY EFFECTIVE IN 3 WEEKS**

**MANY WHO HAVE AVOIDED COVID ARE NOW GETTING INFECTED DESPITE ALL OF THEIR EFFORTS.**

**PAXLOVID ANTI-VIRAL PILLS ARE WIDELY AVAILABLE....  
BUT MOST PEOPLE DO NOT REQUIRE MEDICATION TO  
TREAT THEIR CASE OF COVID.**

**PLEASE LIVE LIFE, BEING CAREFUL IN WAYS THAT  
MAKE YOU FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE, BUT DO NOT  
RESTRICT YOUR ACTIVITIES.**

**WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION, BUT  
AT THIS TIME, IN THE USA FOR THE MULTI-VACCINATED,  
WE HAVE REACHED OUR ENDPOINT.**

**FOR THE UNVACCINATED.... KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE  
ROAD.... COVID CONTINUES TO BE AN ISSUE.  
THE CURRENT VARIANT IS MUCH MILD, BUT THERE  
ARE CONCERNS FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT  
VACCINATED. WE ARE TREATING NEARLY ALL THE  
UNVACCINATED THAT GET COVID.**

**IF YOU HAVE SIGNIFICANT RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS,  
PRESUME THIS IS COVID AND PROTECT OTHERS!!!**

**PAXLOVID PILLS AVAILABLE FOR ALL BUT ARE ONLY  
NECESSARY FOR THOSE WITH CHALLENGING  
SYMPTOMS IN THE FIRST 5 DAYS OR THOSE AT HIGH  
RISK FOR COMPLICATIONS FROM BREAKTHROUGH  
COVID.**

**I RECOMMEND THE BOOSTER GENERALLY, WITH THESE  
SPECIFIC COMMENTS:**

## **DO GET THE BOOSTER IF:**

- YOU HAD 4 SHOTS AND DID WELL WITH THEM, YOU SHOULD DO WELL WITH THE 5<sup>TH</sup> SHOT.
- IF YOU DID NOT GET BREAKTHROUGH COVID YET.
- THE OLDER YOU ARE THE MORE BENEFICIAL THE 5<sup>TH</sup> COVID SHOT. FOR 70 AND ABOVE THE SHOT IS DEFINITELY QUITE USEFUL. UNDER THAT AGE IT'S LESS BENEFICIAL AND UP TO YOU PERSONALLY IF YOU WANT THE SHOT.
- DO STAY WITH THE SAME SHOT. IF YOU HAVE BEEN GETTING PFIZER...STAY WITH PFIZER. IF YOU HAVE BEEN GETTING MODERNA...STAY WITH MODERNA.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MASKING WHEN TRAVELLING IS A PERSONAL DECISION.**

- DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF IF OTHERS ARE MASKING. IF YOU WEAR A HIGH-QUALITY MASK YOU ARE INCREASING YOUR PROTECTION AND DECREASING YOUR RISK.
- I DO RECOMMEND WEARING A KN95 OR N95 IN THE AIRPORT TERMINAL WHERE EXPOSURE IS GREATEST.
- ON THE AIRPLANE, WHEN THE ENGINES ARE FULLY ON, THE AIR IS BEING HIGHLY FILTERED AND EXPOSURE IS MUCH LESS. WEARING AN EXCELLENT MASK WILL REDUCE YOUR RISK DURING FLIGHT, BUT IT IS UP TO YOU IF YOU WISH TO USE THE MASK AT THAT TIME.

## **GUIDELINES IF YOU GET BREAKTHROUGH COVID:**

<https://doctordoug.com/2022/01/10/i-have-covidwhat-do-i-do/>

COVID TESTING WITH AT HOME TESTS (ANTIGEN TESTS) ARE GENERALLY ACCURATE AND THEY ARE USEFUL.

BUT A NEGATIVE TEST IN THE SETTING OF CLASSIC SYMPTOMS.... IS LIKELY A FALSE RESULT.

DO A PCR TEST TO CROSS CHECK OR IF YOU HAVE CLASSIC COVID SYMPTOMS, OR YOU MAY 'HOLD ON ADDITIONAL TESTING' AND PRESUME YOU HAVE COVID AND FOLLOW PRACTICES FOR THOSE WITH COVID.

5 DAYS OF QUARANTINE AND 5 DAYS OF MASKING IS THE PLAN FOR ALL COVID POSITIVE PATIENTS WHO HAVE BEEN VACCINATED.

PAXLOVID (PFIZER PILL FOR COVID) & MOLNUPIRAVIR (MERCK PILL) ARE AVAILABLE BUT RECOMMENDED ONLY FOR THOSE AT PARTICULARLY HIGH RISK OF COMPLICATIONS (IMMUNE SUPPRESSED OR UNVACCINATED).

## **HOW DO I GET TESTED FOR POSSIBLE ACTIVE COVID INFECTION?**

TESTING CAN BE DONE AT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE CITY OR BY A SELF-TEST FROM YOUR LOCAL PHARMACY.

<https://doctordoug.com/2020/11/22/covid-19-testing-sites/>

YOU MAY PURCHASE A HOME TEST KIT FROM AMAZON OR YOU CAN GET SIMILAR KITS AT WALGREENS OR CVS OR YOUR LOCAL PHARMACY.

I THINK IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO HAVE A HOME KIT FOR SELF-TESTING AT HOME. IT IS LIKELY YOU WILL USE IT BY THE END OF WINTER.

## **RECOMMENDED HOME TEST KITS FROM AMAZON ARE:**

- iHealth COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test
- Quidel QuickVue at-Home OTC COVID-19

[https://www.amazon.com/iHealth-COVID-19-Authorized-Non-invasive-Discomfort/dp/B09KZ6TBNY/ref=sr\\_1\\_1\\_sspa?crid=1QISNYIENRKEO&keywords=ihealth+covid-19+antigen+rapid+test&qid=1655045654&sprefix=ihealth%2Caps%2C169&sr=8-1-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUExNUkwMFdSWlNQTVQwJmVuY3J5cHRIZElkPUEwMzc1MzMzMzBUUjJUSVg4UFA5UyZlbnNyeXBoZWRBZElkPUEwNDQ5MzI4MzMNBOTdXUk9TSk5FMiZ3aWRnZXR0YW1lPXNwX2FoZiZhY3Rpb249Y2xpY2tSZWRpcmVjdCZkbo5vdExvZoNs aWNrPXRydWU=](https://www.amazon.com/iHealth-COVID-19-Authorized-Non-invasive-Discomfort/dp/B09KZ6TBNY/ref=sr_1_1_sspa?crid=1QISNYIENRKEO&keywords=ihealth+covid-19+antigen+rapid+test&qid=1655045654&sprefix=ihealth%2Caps%2C169&sr=8-1-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUExNUkwMFdSWlNQTVQwJmVuY3J5cHRIZElkPUEwMzc1MzMzMzBUUjJUSVg4UFA5UyZlbnNyeXBoZWRBZElkPUEwNDQ5MzI4MzMNBOTdXUk9TSk5FMiZ3aWRnZXR0YW1lPXNwX2FoZiZhY3Rpb249Y2xpY2tSZWRpcmVjdCZkbo5vdExvZoNs aWNrPXRydWU=)

[https://www.amazon.com/Quidel-QuickVue-at-Home-COVID-19-Test/dp/B093NBTF75/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?crid=25COAA6CR9FBY&dchild=1&keywords=rapid+covid+testing+kit+for+home&qid=1630678185&sprefix=rapid+covid+test%2Caps%2C241&sr=8-3](https://www.amazon.com/Quidel-QuickVue-at-Home-COVID-19-Test/dp/B093NBTF75/ref=sr_1_3?crid=25COAA6CR9FBY&dchild=1&keywords=rapid+covid+testing+kit+for+home&qid=1630678185&sprefix=rapid+covid+test%2Caps%2C241&sr=8-3)

## **TESTING LOCATIONS CAN ALSO BE FOUND HERE:**

<https://doctordoug.com/2020/11/22/covid-19-testing-sites/>  
YOU CAN SEE DAILY TRENDS FOR ARIZONA AND THE U.S. HERE, ON THE CDC WEBSITE...JUST CHOOSE 'ARIZONA' FROM THE LIST.

[https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends\\_dailytrends](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_dailytrends)

To monitor the course of COVID in Maricopa County, go to: <https://covidactnow.org>

**LOCATIONS FOR COVID TESTING OTHER THAN OUR OFFICE...SEE OUR UPDATED LIST:**

**<https://doctordoug.com/2020/06/30/covid-19-testing-sites/>**

**LATE NIGHT TESTING AT NEXT CARE FACILITIES IS A CONSIDERATION. HERE IS THE LINK:**

**<https://nextcare.com/curbside/>**

Know that our office is responding to COVID, and we are here to help. Reach out for assistance if you are not feeling well. We will develop a plan of action for you to move forward.

Yours in good health,

*Dr. Lakin*