



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**SAN FRANCISCO URGES SAFER CHOICES DURING HOLIDAY SEASON,
RECOMMENDS COVID-19 BOOSTERS FOR ALL ADULTS**

COVID-19 cases are increasing in San Francisco, making it especially important to make safer choices during holiday celebrations, travel, and gatherings

San Francisco, CA — As the winter holiday season is upon us, the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFPDH) supports safe celebrations and gatherings as an important part of recovery from the pandemic, especially when it comes to our mental health and overall wellbeing.

We are seeing an uptick of COVID cases in San Francisco and across the region as we enter the holiday season and people increase activity. As we work to slow the spread of the virus, it is more important than ever to exercise caution and make safer choices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 during the holidays. While we are in a far better place than last year, higher case numbers are still tied to higher rates of hospitalization and more deaths. There are many common-sense measures such as vaccinations, masking, testing that can help keep us safe and protect the most vulnerable among us from developing a severe case of COVID or becoming hospitalized.

SFPDH is now recommending COVID-19 boosters for everyone 18 and older to strengthen their immune systems. Boosters are now **essential** for anyone in a higher risk category, including seniors ages 65 and older; people with underlying medical conditions; people who live and work in high-risk settings; and anyone who received a Johnson & Johnson vaccine. For more guidance on boosters and timing, go to: sf.gov/information/get-your-booster

Newly eligible for vaccines are children ages 5 to 11, and they should begin their two-dose vaccination series as soon as possible. A person is not fully vaccinated until two weeks after their second primary dose.

“This holiday season, it’s wonderful to see us resuming the many festivities, gatherings, and travel that make us feel whole again and connected to one another,” said Director of Health, Dr. Grant Colfax. “Please remember to keep safety in mind as we navigate varied social situations – for our own wellbeing, and for our loved ones and our community. Our best tools to combat the worst of COVID-19 are vaccines, including boosters.”

Keep in mind that San Francisco’s [Safer Return Together health order](#) is still in effect, requiring indoor masks in most public settings where people come and go, such as retail stores, and proof of vaccinations where food and drink is consumed, such as restaurants and bars.



SFDPH guidance on celebrating safely includes the following:

- Get vaccinated against COVID-19, including children ages 5-11 now that they are eligible.
- Get a COVID-19 booster -- especially if you're a senior or at higher risk.
- Get a flu vaccine, which can be taken safely with a COVID-19 booster
- Choose outdoor activities over indoor activities, and limit being in crowds especially if you are unvaccinated
- Wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings, or whenever feasible in private indoor settings – especially when unvaccinated are present or the vaccination status of those present is unknown
- Wash your hands frequently and carry hand sanitizer wherever you go
- Delay travel until you are fully vaccinated. This means two weeks after completing your primary dose series (two doses for Pfizer and Moderna or one dose of Johnson & Johnson)
- Monitor your health and stay home if you feel sick, and get tested
- Consider testing within 72 hours before you travel or gather with others as you may have an asymptomatic infection. You can use an FDA-approved rapid at-home, self-test kit, reach out to your health service provider, a travel testing provider, or to receive a test, go to: sf.gov/gettested

San Francisco is making progress on vaccinating and boosting our residents as a result of the efforts of community partners and nearly 100 vaccination sites across the City that are within a 10-15-minute walk of most residents.

To date, we have fully vaccinated 80% of the eligible population, and since early November have administered first doses to more than 13,000 children ages 5 to 11, or about 30% of the age group.

With boosters, we have reached 138,000 San Francisco residents 18 years of age and older who qualify based on the timing of their previous dose (6 months past the second dose of a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, and 2 months past the Johnson & Johnson vaccine). About 43% of seniors ages 65 and older, who are among the high risk, have received a booster. We are averaging 3,900 boosters per day.

These efforts will help the City avert a winter surge, in addition to San Franciscans making safer choices as they enjoy the holidays together.

While SFDPH-affiliated vaccine facilities are ready to turn no one away, health systems and pharmacies may need time to respond to the booster expansion. For example, patients may still see screening tools used during appointment bookings asking them to attest to a narrower set of eligibility criteria. As the systems are updated, people should choose the least restrictive of the criteria that applies to them. Many work and residential settings pose the risk of exposure to COVID.

For more information on where to get a vaccination or booster in San Francisco visit: sf.gov/getvaccinated.

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