



News Release

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New report tracks risk of COVID-19 reinfection in Washington state

OLYMPIA – Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has published a new, weekly report that provides an insight into COVID-19 reinfections. This report includes information on hospitalizations and deaths, demographics, trends over time, and vaccination status of people with a reinfection where DOH has information about both infection events.

Reinfection means a person was infected once with the virus that causes COVID-19, recovered, and then later became infected again. A person with a reinfection could be fully vaccinated, partially vaccinated, or unvaccinated. This report is located on the [COVID-19 Data Dashboard :: Washington State Department of Health](#) and is updated weekly.

“We are still learning about COVID-19 and the duration and strength of immunity following infection with this virus,” said Scott Lindquist, MD, MPH, state epidemiologist for communicable diseases. “Based on what we know from similar respiratory viruses, we expect some COVID-19 reinfections to occur.”

The first [report](#) indicates that from September 1 through December 26, 2021, in Washington state:

- A total of 4,404 people had a reinfection out of a total of 264,520 cases.
- 223 (5.1%) people with a reported reinfection were hospitalized.
- 22 (0.9%) people with a reported reinfection died.
- 2,640 (59.9%) of people with a reinfection were unvaccinated.

DOH can only identify people who have been reinfected if both their original infection and their second infection were diagnosed by a COVID-19 test and reported to the state. Since many COVID-19 infections are asymptomatic and not diagnosed by a test, DOH will not be able to

classify those individuals as reinfected. As a result, the reported number of people reinfected or hospitalized or died from a reinfection is likely lower than the actual number of reinfection events.

The risk of reinfection is likely dependent on a variety of factors including:

- the risk of exposure to other people with COVID-19,
- COVID-19 vaccination status, and
- patient characteristics (such as underlying health conditions).

This risk may change over time as immunity wanes or as new variants emerge. Variants associated with reinfections will be included in the [SARS-CoV-2 Sequencing and Variants in Washington State](#). Ongoing COVID-19 studies will help us understand more about cases of reinfection.

While reinfection is relatively rare, the best protection against getting any COVID-19 infection is to get vaccinated, and then get a booster shot when eligible. Children between the ages of 5 and 11 are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine and should start their two-shot series immediately. [As of today](#), youth ages 12 to 17 may receive a booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at least 5 months after completing their primary vaccination series.

To slow transmission of disease and protect people, save lives, and prevent our hospitals from overcrowding, everyone is encouraged to take COVID-19 prevention measures including consistent and proper mask wearing.

The [DOH website](#) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. [Find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#). Sign up for the DOH blog, [Public Health Connection](#).

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