

Clinician Update

Jan. 4, 2022

Special Edition: Spikes in COVID-19 Cases and Hospitalizations Mark New Phase in Pandemic

Tomorrow Night: Join Us for a 2022 COVID-19 Surge Update for Clinicians

This latest COVID-19 surge has created unprecedented demands across Virtua Health and our community at large, in many ways greater than at any point in the pandemic. With the latest information on Virtua's response on testing, staffing, vaccination, and treatment, senior leaders are holding a webinar **tomorrow Wednesday, Jan. 5, at 6 p.m.**

To join, [a quick registration is required via this link](#). Add your name and email and you will immediately receive a confirmation email and an event link to start the program.

A New Year Brings New Challenges... and Hope

Yesterday, Virtua President and CEO Dennis W. Pullin shared an audio message to colleagues, setting forth the challenges the new year brings with rapidly escalating COVID-19 hospitalizations and related illnesses among colleagues. Pullin outlined efforts to address the surge, including plans to decompress non-urgent volume, redeploy staff, and expedite testing. He challenged us to "see the good in these challenging moments, to ground ourselves in the impact we are having, and the vital needs we are fulfilling." [Listen here](#).

Virtua Reopens COVID-19 Testing Location in Voorhees

Given the prevalence of COVID-19 in the region and the high demand for testing, Virtua has reopened its COVID-19 testing center at the Barry D. Brown Health Education Center (HEC) in Voorhees this week. This site initially provided COVID testing from the start of the pandemic through April 2021.

The testing center serves a variety of needs for symptomatic patients. The site provides PCR COVID tests to Virtua patients who are evaluated by our urgent care telehealth, primary care, and specialty practices, as well as Virtua colleagues who are directed to the HEC by the COVID-19 triage team. The site will soon provide limited community testing to people with active symptoms.

The Voorhees testing center will operate by appointment only.

Important details to note:

- All adults (over age 18) tested at the HEC will be required to have an active MyChart account to receive results.
- Parents/guardians of minors (age 17 and younger) tested at the site will receive phone calls for POSITIVE RESULTS ONLY. Negative results will not be called.
- If parents/guardians already have proxy access for children, these results will also be available in the child's proxy account.
- The testing center offers PCR tests only. Rapid tests are not available.
- Guests will self-administer the test (also known as self-swabbing). Virtua staff will be on hand to offer guidance, answer questions, and observe.
- Guests must arrive to the testing center by private vehicle and must remain in their vehicle at all times.

Please note: For the testing center to be most effective, it must be utilized as intended. Asymptomatic community members who seek testing to return to school/work, travel, or other personal reasons

should consult the State of New Jersey's directory of testing sites here:

<https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/testing>

New Guidance on Monoclonal Antibodies

In an email message sent to VMG, VIN, and medical staff clinicians, Virtua Infection Control Officer Martin Topiel, MD, confirmed that the omicron variant has proven resistant to the supply of monoclonal antibodies that had been used with previous variants like delta. Additionally, he reported that Virtua Health has received a *small quantity* of a more effective agent, Sotrovimab, but the supply is so restricted that we must reserve its use for those who meet the following criteria.

- Patients with an immunosuppressive disease OR
 - a. Patients receiving immunosuppressive medications/treatment OR
 - b. Patients unable to mount an immune response to the full vaccination series

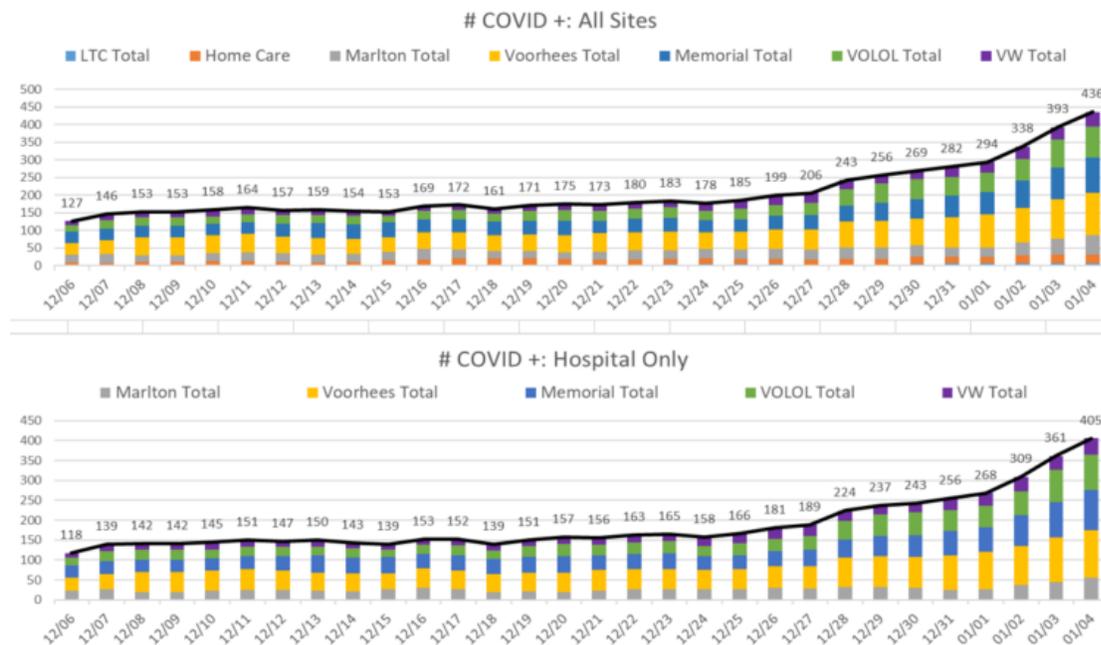
Some examples of such patients include:

- History of malignancy on active chemotherapy
- HIV CD4 <200 c/mm³ (12-15%)
- Inherited immunodeficiency
- Receiving medication such as equivalent of prednisone >3mg/kg or 20mg/day for more than 14 days; methotrexate; monoclonal antibody; antimetabolite; any biologic or chemotherapeutic agent found to cause significant immune suppression

We ask clinicians to follow the referral process outlined in the email communication.

Dr. Topiel also reported that we await further information regarding the oral Covid-19 treatment, Paxlovid, which was granted emergency use authorization by the FDA.

COVID-19 Census



Latest COVID-19 Fast Facts

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey is 1.74.
- The total number of cases are as follows:
 - Burlington County: 62,111 cases
 - Camden County: 77,359 cases
 - Gloucester County: 42,091 cases
- COVID-associated mortality for Camden, Burlington, and Gloucester counties: 3,097.
- The state's Vaccination Overview dashboard reported 15,339,230 doses of vaccine have been administered.

One Step Closer to Approved Boosters for New Groups of Children

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds, and immunocompromised children age 5 to 11. They also reduced the amount of time adolescents should wait between a second and third dose of the vaccine, from six months to five months.

Typically, FDA approval is followed by review by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's vaccine advisory committee, which is set to meet tomorrow. If the CDC concurs, their recommendation is passed to CDC director, Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, who is expected to sign off.

Throughout the pandemic, Virtua Health has followed the CDC with regard to prevention, treatment, and vaccine guidance. You can expect we will update our vaccine protocols in accordance with the CDC's ultimate approval.

In a related matter, last week Jeff Seiden, MD, CHOP at Virtua Pediatric Emergency Department in Voorhees, spoke with NBC10 about his observations and what he anticipates in the new year. [Watch here.](#)

New Visitation Guidelines for Virtua Hospitals

For the health and safety of our patients and their families, as well as our staff and the communities we serve, **general visitation is suspended at all Virtua hospitals and facilities.**

This safety measure, which went into effect on Dec. 31, is consistent with other regional health systems and the New Jersey Hospital Association's color-coded guidance. At present, all regions of the state are considered in the "red zone" due to the prevalence of COVID-19 in the community.

Virtua will review its visitation policy on a weekly basis.

To help communicate this message to patients and their loved ones, please utilize the following resources.

- Up-to-date visitor guidelines are posted to the [COVID-19 Resource Center](#) page on the **Virtua website**. This includes department-specific exceptions and the required safety behaviors of any visitor granted an exemption. [Click here.](#)
- The Virtua Brand Hub has a **two-sided flyer** detailing visitor guidelines. This flyer can be used as a handout or posted in appropriate public/common areas. [Click here.](#)
- For internal use, the visitor guidelines policy is available on the **Virtua VINE**. [Click here.](#)

- To allow the community to understand and appreciate the need to suspend visitation at Virtua facilities, Jennifer Khelil, DO, senior vice president and chief medical officer, prepared a **special video message**. This video has been shared on Virtua's social media accounts and on the Virtua website. Please [click here](#) to view.