

## Clinician Update November 23, 2021

### Happy Thanksgiving!

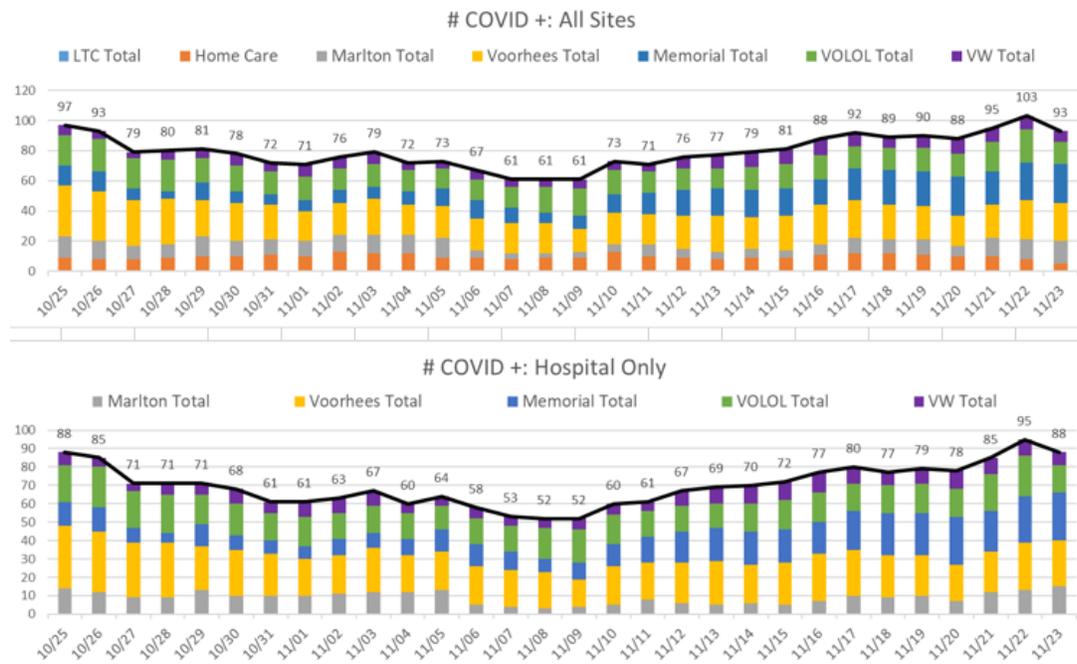
As clinicians, you know all too well, the needs of our community do not take a holiday. You are all selfless professionals and irreplaceable. You serve on the frontlines each day, and that includes holidays. But you too have parents, grandparents, children, and grandchildren who you long to celebrate with. This *Clinician Update* is coming out early this week in advance of the Thanksgiving holiday. We want to take this opportunity to thank you for your hard work and to wish you and your loved ones a safe and restful celebration

In the spirit of gratitude, [stop by the Colleague Facebook page](#) to share your thoughts at this special time of year.

### Spreading Good to 1,100 Households

The Thanksgiving spirit was abundant this week through an effort organized by Virtua’s Eat Well Food Access Team and supported by Virtua Philanthropy and Virtua pulmonologist Eric Szejman, MD, and his family. Virtua Health gave away frozen turkeys and fresh produce to 1,100 local families in need—500 in Burlington County and 600 in Camden County. Each person or family received a 12- to 14-pound frozen turkey, celery, onions, carrots, sweet potatoes, Idaho potatoes, and spices for the turkey. The donations took place via a drive-thru giveaway at Virtua Willingboro Hospital, and a walk-up event at the Virtua Health & Wellness Center — Camden. Virtua senior leaders and other staff worked as volunteers at both events.

### COVID-19 Census



## Latest COVID-19 Fast Facts

- The statewide rate of transmission continues to move upward, now at 1.23.
- The total number of cases as of 3 p.m. are as follows:
  - Burlington County: 48,359 cases
  - Camden County: 61,126 cases
  - Gloucester County: 33,989 cases
- COVID-associated mortality for Camden, Burlington, and Gloucester counties: 2,952.
- The state's Vaccination Overview dashboard reports 13,384,970 doses of vaccine have been administered.

## CHOP at Virtua Pediatrician Offers Advice for Parents Regarding COVID-19 Vaccines

With Thanksgiving upon us and the December holidays close behind, Dr. Jeff Seiden is encouraging the families he cares for—and the people in his personal life—to pursue COVID-19 vaccination for their children ages 5 to 11. Children in this age group have been eligible to receive the two-part Pfizer vaccine (at a reduced-dosage) since early November.

“Families are eager to celebrate the holidays together, especially since many people remained apart last year,” he said. “That’s why we should take advantage of every available opportunity to minimize the risk of acquiring or transmitting COVID-19. It’s wonderful that children as young as 5 can now receive protection.”

As an attending physician in the CHOP at Virtua Pediatric Emergency Department in Voorhees, Dr. Seiden has cared for children—including toddlers and babies—who have contracted COVID-19.

Dr. Seiden said that although most every COVID-positive pediatric patient he’s cared for has made a complete recovery, that does not lessen the emotional duress and other challenging circumstances experienced by these families.

“The child’s health is the most important thing, but we must also consider the fallout of days spent taking care of a sick child, possible emergency department visits or hospitalizations, medical bills, missed work and school—these things have consequences,” he said. “That’s why we should do everything we can to stop children from getting COVID in the first place.”

Looking ahead to winter, a season associated with a variety of communicable diseases and additional time spent indoors, Dr. Seiden expressed two notable concerns:

- **Compounded Illness:** Children (and adults) are likely to experience worse symptoms and require more extensive medical intervention should they acquire two illnesses at once, such as both COVID-19 and the flu.
- **Hospital capacity limits:** Throughout the fall, many area health systems have reported uncommonly high patient volume. Should COVID-19, influenza, and seasonal ailments spike simultaneously, this would present a significant strain on health care resources, including staffing. Dr. Seiden said that hospital administrators might even be forced to ration beds.

When discussing the COVID-19 vaccines with parents, Dr. Seiden will sometimes encounter the following beliefs, and offers counter-responses based on his training, research, and experience.

- **Misconception:** The pandemic is ending, or will soon end on its own.

Dr. Seiden said that the longer we live with this virus, the greater the opportunity for variants to develop, and that the variants could become increasingly severe or transmissible, much like the delta variant.

- **Misconception:** The vaccines were rushed.

In speaking with infectious disease experts at CHOP and Virtua, Dr. Seiden said he has a profound appreciation for the rigorous process required to introduce vaccines to market. “It is a process that does not tolerate risk. It is inherently conservative and cautious. Nothing gets approved on a whim and everything is rooted in data and science,” he said.

- **Misconception:** The vaccines are too risky for kids.

Dr. Seiden said it is important to recognize that there is a risk with every vaccine or health care intervention. As the father of two fully vaccinated teenagers, he said that risk shouldn’t shut down the conversation. Instead, it should serve as the starting point for a dialogue between provider and patient. He also feels strongly that the risks that come with acquiring COVID are far greater—and more worrisome—than the rare, limited risks associated with the vaccines.

One successful tactic Dr. Seiden has discovered for changing parents’ minds is appealing to their sense of social responsibility and supporting societal good.

“Those who can be vaccinated have an opportunity to protect those who are most vulnerable, such as babies and seniors,” he said. “I’ve found that kids are excited to be part of the solution. Kids love superheroes and princesses, and those characters provide examples of why we must defend and care for one another.”

### **How to Get Kids (and Adults) Vaccinated**

Last week, the FDA and CDC officially authorized booster doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines for everyone age 18 and older, six months after their second dose.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe, free, effective, and widely available in South Jersey and beyond. To schedule a vaccine appointment, find a walk-up vaccine site, or for more information about vaccines and COVID-19, please visit <https://www.virtua.org/services/covid19-updates>.

### **The “Voices of Long COVID” Strongly Encourage Vaccination**

Even a year after contracting COVID-19, some patients are still recovering.

In a [CNN article](#), college student Katelyn Van Dyke describes being on winter break in January 2021 when she got sick with COVID-19. Some 10 months later, she says she's still out of breath just walking up the stairs of her dorm, an unexpected turn for someone who played on the varsity soccer team in high school. She says her brain is still so foggy she has trouble processing information and has to write everything on Post-it notes, or she'll forget it.

Katelyn shares her emotional story in a new ad campaign released Tuesday as a part of the "Voices of Long COVID" campaign . Public health leaders hope people, particularly young adults, will hear these stories and get vaccinated, as they are among some of the [least-vaccinated](#) people in the United States.

For some, the ads may be the first time they hear about “long COVID,” a condition with a wide range of new or ongoing health problems that can appear regardless of how sick a person was with their initial infection.

Since last spring, Virtua has offered the [Care After COVID](#) program, which delivers personalized care to get patients back to good health again. In this [video](#), Dr. Angela Skrzynski from Virtua Urgent Care discusses the Care After COVID evaluation and recovery program.

However, defense is the best offense. Vaccines and vaccine booster shots are widely available throughout New Jersey. To find a vaccination site and book an appointment online, consult the state’s vaccine locator at [covid19.nj.gov/finder](https://covid19.nj.gov/finder).

### **Heartfelt Opinion Article by Penn/Virtua Neurosurgeon**

Patrick J. Connolly, MD, is a clinical associate of neurosurgery at Penn Medicine and chief of neurosurgery at Virtua Health. In this [opinion article published today in the Philadelphia Inquirer](#), he addresses the important topic of equitable access to medical care by sharing a personal connection with his dying patient.

### **Virtua’s ASC Network Continues to Grow**

Virtua Health’s joint venture ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) are modern, state-of-the-art health care facilities that transform the outpatient experience, providing the highest caliber care for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures and surgery.

Virtua recently partnered with two new centers, growing Virtua’s portfolio to a total of 28 partner ASCs. In addition to enhancing outpatient services, the ASC partnerships have boosted Virtua’s footprint throughout New Jersey, and now also into Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Much of Virtua’s success in joint venturing with ASCs is a result of the meaningful relationships forged with physician partners in various specialties. Looking ahead, Virtua plans to expand the scope of services currently offered to include more complex and higher acuity cases.

[For a listing of Virtua’s network of ASCs, click here.](#) To learn more about partnering with a Virtua ASC, contact Jayme Bundy, business development specialist, at [jbundy@virtua.org](mailto:jbundy@virtua.org).

### **Musicians on Call Concert on Wednesday**

You can share in the gratitude of an uplifting musical performance by talented artists. [Musicians on Call](#) brings the healing power of music to select hospitals across the U.S., serving patients, families, and colleagues with virtual performances live each Wednesday at 3 p.m. [by just clicking on this link](#).

Previously held concerts are found in the calendar link for the previous month so patients, families, and staff can access at any time they need a break or mood lifter.