

Living with COVID-19 at Work:

Fact Sheet: Omicron BA-5 and other variants of COVID-19



New Dangers, New Solutions

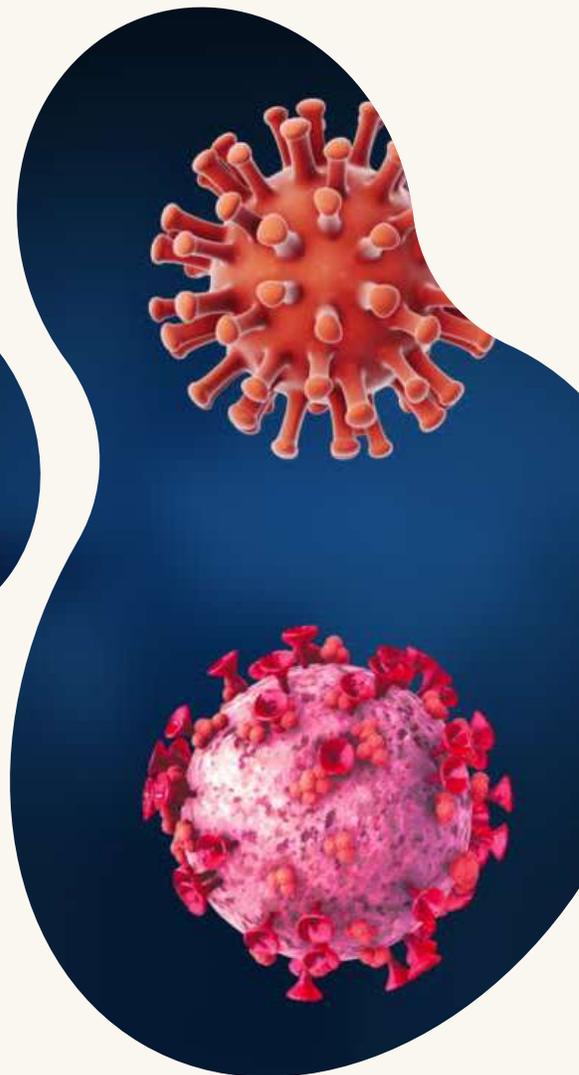
The COVID-19 pandemic is not only still with us; it keeps changing, with new variants evolving and new tools for workplaces to use for prevention. To stay safe, workers need access to the latest information as well as prevention strategies.



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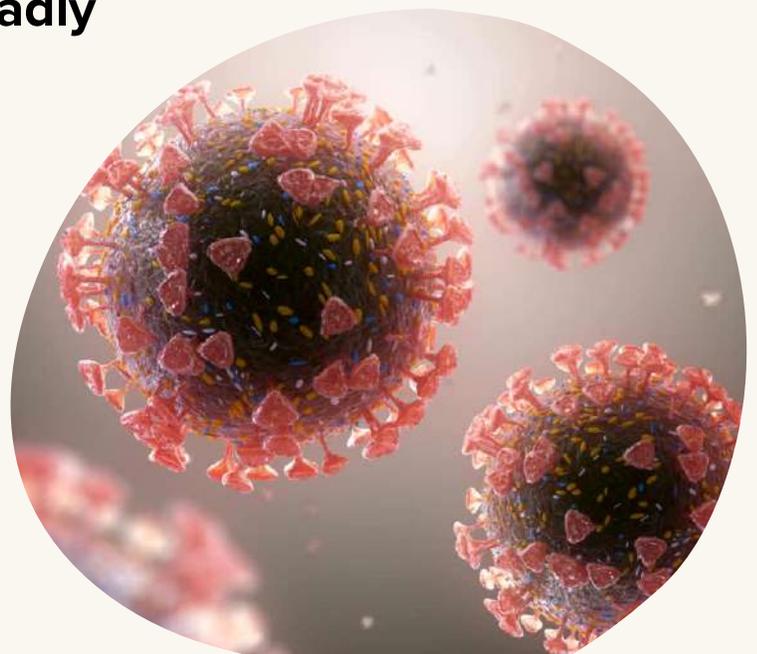
The Bad News:

-  The **COVID-19** pandemic is still present in our workplaces, and is still a highly contagious airborne illness. Many workers are exposed to and likely to get sick from **Omicron BA-5**, a new variant of the virus.
-  While vaccinations are still an effective method of slowing the spread of **COVID** and reducing cases of serious illness, **BA-5** and other variants can cause severe symptoms in both vaccinated and unvaccinated workers.
-  The course of the illness tends to last longer in many cases, with rebound symptoms often coming back in a second week of illness.



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- 🦠 **Workers have reported being ill in two or three separate instances.**
- 🦠 **Although home testing is now widely available, many tests are not sensitive enough at the early stages of the illness. This means that workers think they had a negative test, but are really contagious and later get a positive test.**
- 🦠 **Some 20% of affected workers are suffering from “long covid,” with symptoms such as neurological disorders.**
- 🦠 **There is still no consistent program to track worker COVID-19 infections and deaths due to workplace exposure. Most affected workers and their families are not being compensated for a deadly illness they have contracted through work.**



The Good News:

 Vaccines and new medications such as Paxlovid are providing increased protections to keep workers out of the hospitals and able to recover.

 We know much more about the pandemic now that we did during its early stages in 2020. For example, we now know that COVID-19 is spread mostly by airborne contaminants that infected individuals breathe out, especially in the early stages of infection.



Work organization plans can be designed to keep workers safe. The goal is to reduce crowds, limit time of interactions and avoid close contact.



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Safe distances and safe air with ventilation and masks are proven prevention strategies to keep workers safe. This is often called a layered prevention strategy.



Workers are using this knowledge to demand and win safety protections on the job. As with other hazards, joining together with your co-workers is the most effective way to make change and reduce risk for everyone in your workplace.



Demands to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection for you and your co-workers:

- **Set up a workplace health and safety committee to monitor the implementation of recommendations for work teams.**
- **A written program, in every workplace, to protect workers from the hazards of infectious diseases.**
- **Employers should develop the plan in cooperation with workers.**
- **Implement hazard control measures such as safe distancing, regular testing and increased air-flow into indoor spaces.**
- **Provide training to all workers on the plan and its implementation.**



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- **Monitor use and effectiveness of all control measures.**
- **Make sure workers can report hazards and illnesses and take time off without penalty.**
- **Provide access to testing and support for workers impacted by COVID-19. Provide supplemental pay to all frontline workers.**
- **Post and distribute reports on implementation progress to all workers in an accessible and timely manner.**



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