

Covid 19 Update: Vaccine Booster and Omicron Variant

Omicron Variant

Based on the limited available information at this time (12/9/21), the omicron variant of SARS-Covid 2 (Covid 19) may be more transmissible (~3-fold), but does not appear to cause more serious disease than the delta variant. Physicians in South Africa report that by in large, their omicron-infected patients do not exhibit serious symptoms or require hospitalization.

Effectiveness of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines against the omicron variant

The news media is filled with articles stating that omicron variant appears to 'escape' from neutralization by antibodies produced in response to the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. However, the reports note that a booster vaccination can dramatically enhance protection.

So, what's going on?

The single study offers data from 12 Pfizer or Moderna immunized individuals—a sample size that is far too small to merit the intensity of the media response. Nonetheless, the limited data show that the neutralization of the omicron variant requires 40x the amount of immune serum (the fluid left after removing all cells from a blood sample) than required to neutralize the delta variant.

This sounds very worrisome. But we can deal with this situation by simply getting a booster immunization. Why?

Getting a booster shot dramatically increases antibody levels and thus makes it much, much easier to neutralize the omicron variant. Think of it this way: You're driving your car and it stalls on Stratford Road. You get out and try and push it towards the nearby repair shop. But you aren't strong enough to do it by yourself. Your car isn't 'escaping'. It's just not moving with just you doing the pushing. So, you find nine passers-by who agree to help you. The ten of you get the job done. More antibodies mean we can neutralize or 'push' the omicron variant.

Our Temple Emanuel Covid guidelines are in line with current CDC guidelines and are working quite well. Our situation will get even better as more adults receive booster vaccinations and children their initial two immunizations.