CDC expands COVID-19 booster shots to cover teens 16 and 17 years old

The CDC expanded recommendations for booster shots to now include 16- and 17-year-olds. The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is the only vaccine authorized and recommended for this age group. All teens who are 16 and 17 years old may get a booster shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at least 6 months after completing their primary COVID-19 vaccination series. Initial data suggests that COVID-19 booster shots help strengthen protection against severe illness from Omicron and other variants.

COVID-19 cases from the Omicron variant increase sevenfold in the U.S.

While Delta remains by far the most dominant variant on a national scale in the United States, the percentage of new cases attributed to Omicron has increased from 0.4% on December 4 to 2.9% on December 11. Overall, this data shows a sevenfold increase in Omicron cases. The first confirmed case of the Omicron variant detected in the United States was identified two weeks ago in California. Preliminary evidence suggests that booster shots can help protect against this variant, but more research is needed.

FDA authorizes additional pre- and post-exposure treatments for COVID-19

The U.S. FDA recently revised the EUA of bamlanivimab and etesevimab, two monoclonal antibodies given together to treat COVID-19, to treat mild to moderate COVID-19 in all younger pediatric patients, including newborns, who have a positive COVID-19 test and are at high risk for severe COVID-19. The antibodies can also be used as post-exposure prevention for all pediatric patients. Additionally, the FDA issued an EUA for AstraZeneca’s Evusheld to be used to help prevent COVID-19 in certain adults and pediatric individuals.

FDA updates the impact of viral mutations on the effectiveness of COVID-19 tests

The FDA announced that some COVID-19 tests are differently affected by viral mutations in the SARS-CoV-2 virus due to the inherent design differences of each test. The FDA’s analysis to date has identified certain EUA-authorized molecular tests whose performance may be impacted by mutations in the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant. The agency identified at least two tests with reduced ability to detect this variant: the Revogene SARS-CoV-2 by Meridian Bioscience and the DTPM COVID-19 RT-PCR Test by Tide Laboratories.

CDC intensifies testing requirement for international travel into the U.S.

All air passengers flying into the U.S., regardless of vaccination status, must show a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than one day before travel or provide documentation of recovery from a recent COVID-19 infection. One day does not mean 24 hours though. If your flight departs at 5 p.m. on Friday, you can take your test at any time on Thursday or before your flight on Friday. This new requirement replaces a previous rule that allowed travelers to take a pre-departure test no more than 72 hours (3 days) before flying.