AppHealthCare
Caring for our Community

Watauga Communicable Disease Update
January 6th, 2022

Trends, Updates & Important Points

- With COVID cases on the rise, be aware of testing options and resources (see COVID-19 Resources). NCDHHS has partnered with StarMed to offer free telehealth treatment services for people who are COVID-19 positive. Antiviral pills are a safe treatment for those who test positive within 5 days of feeling sick & are at risk of severe illness. Visit StarMed.Care/NC.
- CDC Community Levels within the state have increased. Alleghany is at a medium community level. Watauga and Ashe Counties remain low.
- COVID-19 regional hospitalization admissions have increased across age groups
- Most flu deaths are occuring in adults age 65+, however there have been many younger individuals hospitalized and who have had fatal cases as well (see Influenza Associated Deaths Reported in NC by Age Group figure).
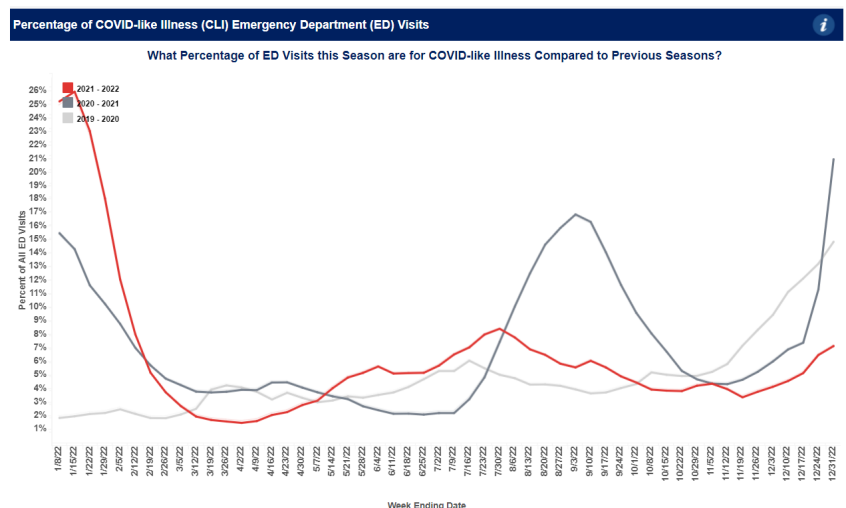
Respiratory Virus Surveillance and Recommendations

New Respiratory Virus Surveillance Dashboard
NC DHHS's Respiratory Virus Surveillance Dashboard shows past and present trends.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and Influenza (flu)

- Consistently higher rates of ED visits for flu-like illness than the 2019-20 flu season.
- 2.7% of Emergency Department (ED) visits this week are attributed to influenza-like illness, which is higher than the two previous years.
- Flu-like illness is causing many deaths across age groups, with the highest number of deaths being in adults ages 65 and older.

Percentage of COVID-like Illness (CLI) Emergency Department (ED) Visits

What Percentage of ED Visits this Season are for COVID-like Illness Compared to Previous Seasons?

Prevention Basics:

- Get up to date with a flu shot and your COVID-19 vaccine series or booster. This is especially important for anyone who has an underlying health condition or is age 50 or older. Also, if you are 65 and older, consider getting a pneumonia vaccine as well.
- Stay home when you are sick and get a test to determine if you have the flu, COVID, or something else that needs treatment by a healthcare provider.

- Wash your hands often and use hand sanitizer when you do not have access to soap and water.
- Make a plan before you get sick. Stock up on COVID-19 test kits at home and talk to your healthcare provider about getting access to treatment for flu or COVID if you become sick.
- Consider your risks and layer protection, including using a high quality mask when you may be in crowded areas or around people who may be at high risk for severe illness.

Symptoms to Watch Out for:
- RSV, flu and COVID-19 are all respiratory viruses so a lot of the symptoms someone could experience are similar. Common symptoms can be fever, cough, fatigue, congestion/stuffy nose, sore throat and headache. Additionally, RSV may include signs of wheezing, rapid or belly breathing and needs prompt attention by contacting your healthcare provider for guidance.
- If you have any of these symptoms, we encourage you to use an at-home test for COVID-19 and/or see your healthcare provider early so they may be able to provide early evaluation and treatment medication. If you have shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, it is important to seek emergency care, but only in a true emergency.
- If you are age 50 or older or if you have an underlying health condition you may be at greater risk for complications from the respiratory viruses like flu and COVID-19. Finding out whether you have COVID-19 and/or the flu or RSV can direct your provider to prescribe the most appropriate treatment to decrease your risk of a severe case of illness. Now is the time to make sure you have COVID-19 at-home tests readily available and a plan for contacting your family healthcare provider in case you or someone in your family does get sick. We offer free at-home COVID-19 test kits and anyone is welcome to come by our offices and pick some up while supplies last.

When to Seek Medical Help:
- If someone is experiencing severe symptoms like shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, pain or pressure in their chest, confusion/disorientation, inability to stay awake or wake up or other concerning symptoms, seek emergency care immediately. For parents who are concerned their child is ill, please contact your healthcare provider early for testing and treatment. If you see signs of troubled breathing, wheezing, blue skin, nails or lips, please seek emergency care immediately.
- If someone is sick, we encourage them to reach out to a healthcare provider to see what kind of testing is recommended. There are treatments available for both COVID-19 and the flu that can be prescribed by a healthcare provider and it is important to start the treatment early and not wait.

Mpox Data in North Carolina

(Mpox data accessed from NCDHHS Mpox Data Dashboard, with mpox case count current as of 12/28/2022, and demographic and vaccine information current as of 11/2/2022. Mpox Cases by Date of Symptom Onset is current as of 12/28/022 accessed from NCDHHS's 2022 Mpox Surveillance Data)

Mpox Updates:
- Case have been trending downwards since September, 2022
- As of 12/1/2022 there have been no cases detected in Alleghany, Ashe, or Watauga Counties

North Carolina Mpox Cases by Week of Symptom Onset, 2022
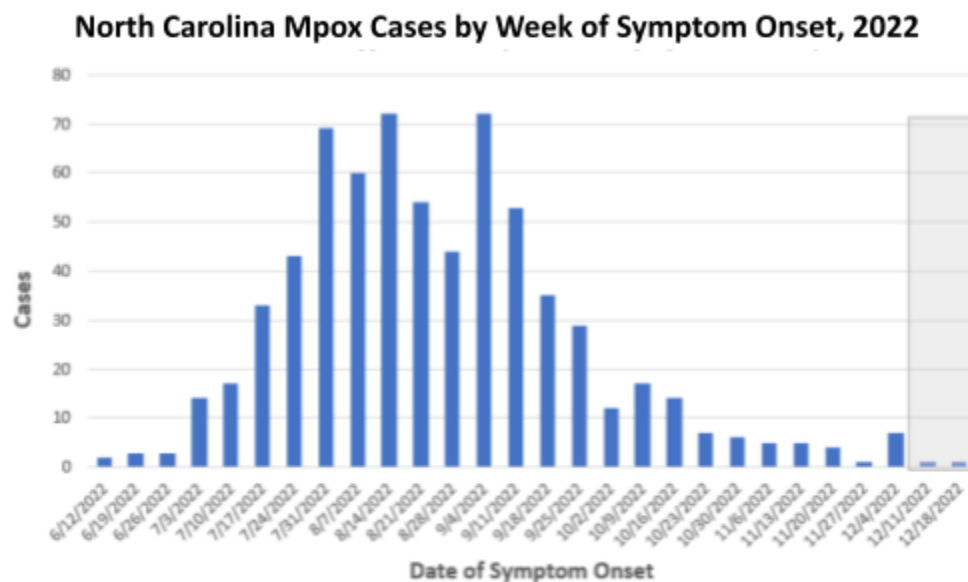
General Communicable Disease Data

General Communicable Disease and Vaccine Preventable Disease:
Vaccines prevent disease in the people who receive them and also in the broader community. Because of childhood vaccination programs, diseases like polio, measles, diphtheria, rubella (German measles), mumps, tetanus, and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) are no longer widespread in the United States. However, cases and outbreaks of these diseases continue to occur due to travel to and from areas with lower vaccine coverage. Many diseases however are not preventable through vaccines, including but not limited to lyme disease, rocky mountain spotted fever, and salmonella.

The figures below represent general communicable disease cases in residents of Watauga County by month, excluding COVID-19 and sexually transmitted conditions.

Watauga County Communicable Disease Cases by Month
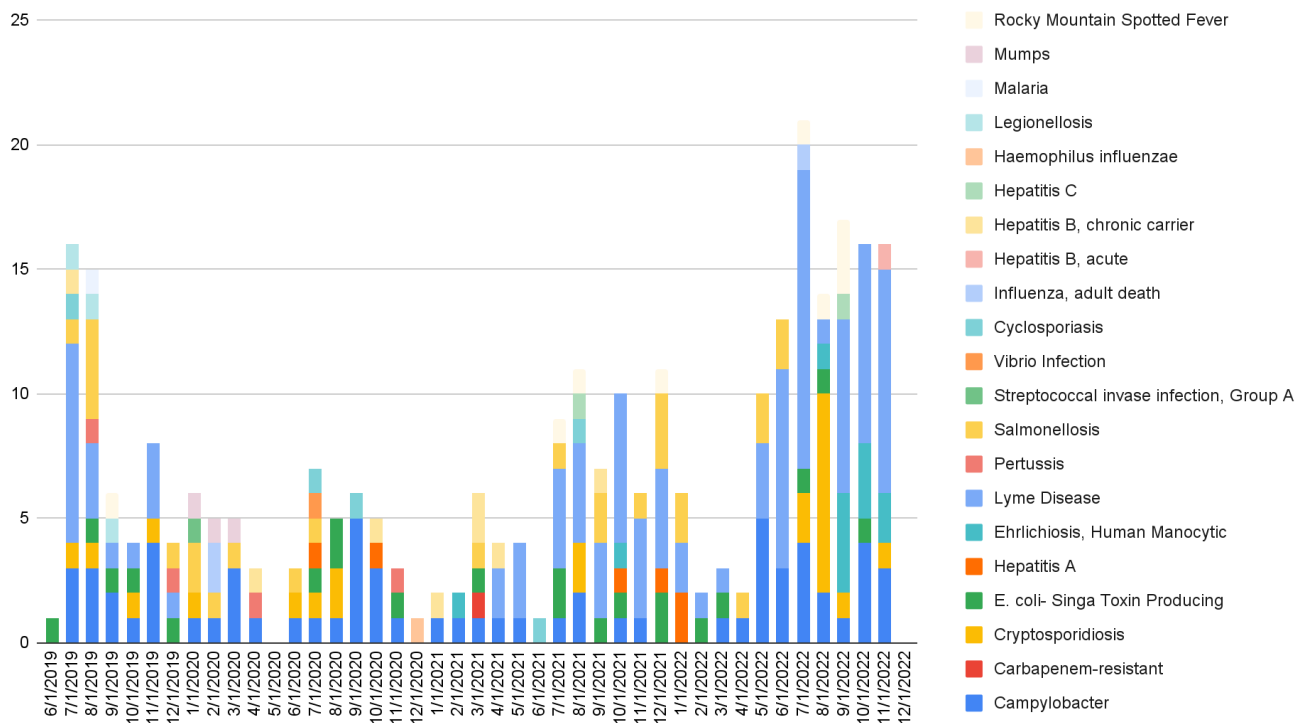
Watauga County Vaccine Preventable Disease (VPD) and Non Vaccine Preventable Disease (Non-VPD)by Month
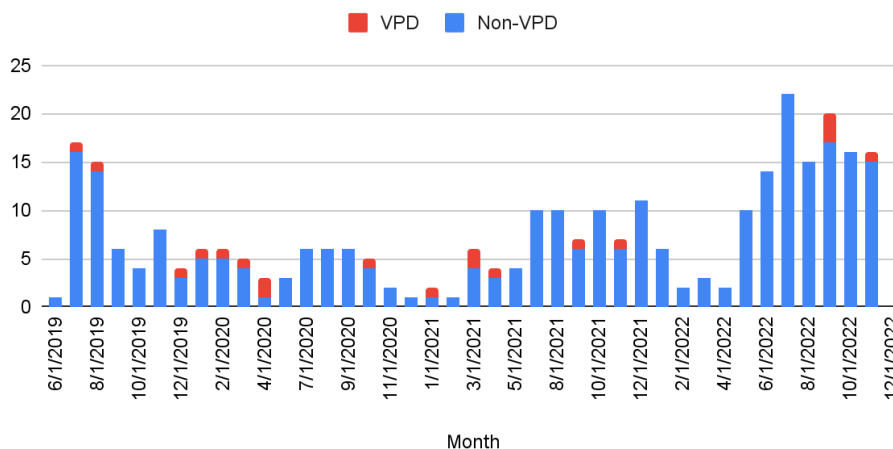
Sexually Transmitted Conditions:

In North Carolina, there are eight reportable bacterial sexually transmitted conditions (STDs & STIs), including gonorrhea, chlamydia, chancroid, lymphogranuloma venereum, granuloma inguinale, nongonococcal urethritis, syphilis, and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). Chlamydia is the most prevalent STC in Watauga County, with gonorrhea as the second most prevalent.

To prevent the spread of STDs, NCDHHS's Communicable Disease Branch supports free testing and treatment in many diverse settings, including community-based organizations and correctional facilities. AppHealthCare provides clinical services, education and awareness efforts and monitoring disease trends through surveillance and epidemiology.

To best prevent the spread of STDs, seek treatment if relevant, seek free routine testing, and take precautions to promote safety.

Monthly STC (Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, and PID) Cases by Year
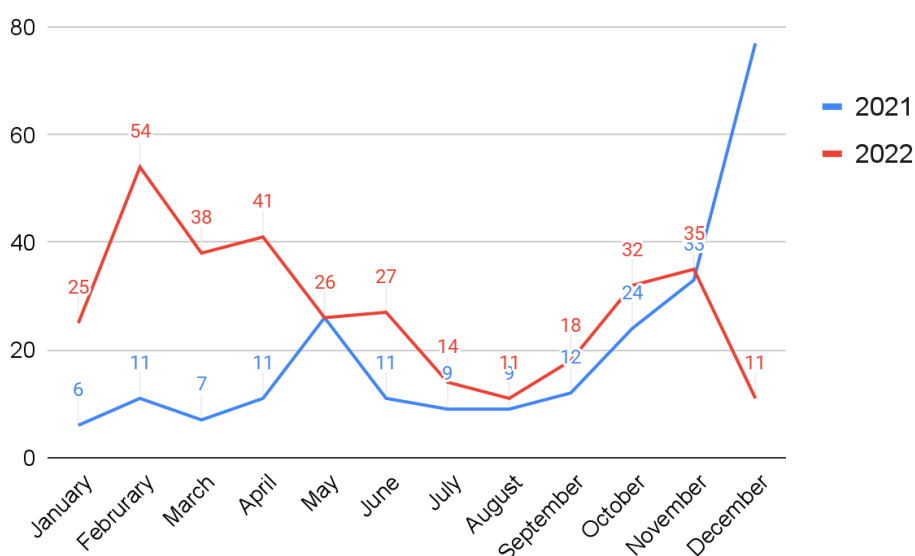
Reportable Sexually Transmitted Conditions in Watauga County by Month
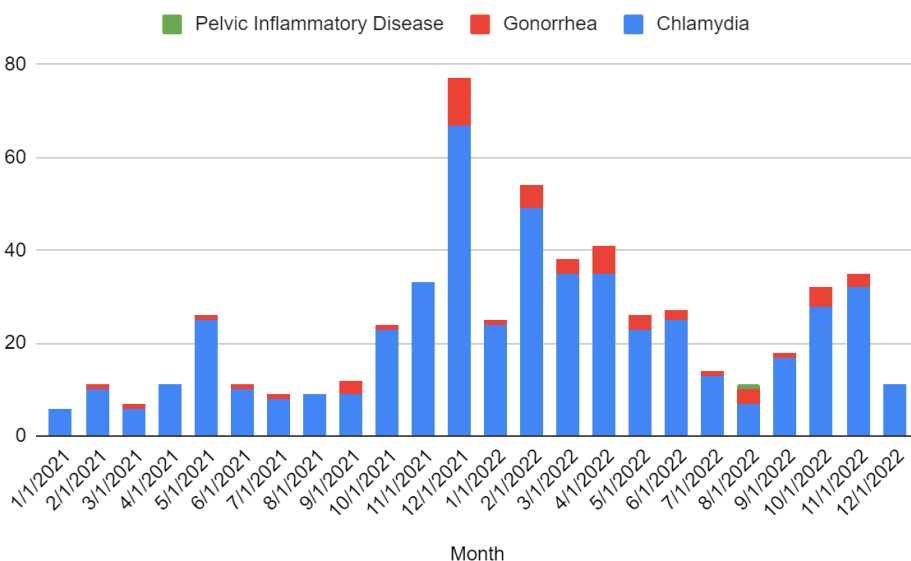
COVID-19 Watauga County Vaccination Updates

County-specific race, ethnicity and age data are from the <u>NCDHHS COVID-19 Vaccination Dashboard,</u>
Vaccine demographic data are current as of 1/4/2023.

Initial Vaccinations

Initial vaccination updates reflect the percentage of all Watauga County residents. Initial series range from one to three doses based on the vaccine type (Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson and Johnson, etc.) and the recipient's age.
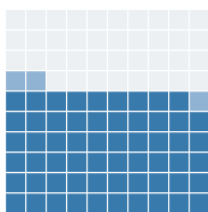
65+ Year Olds	18+ Year Olds	5-17 Year Olds	0-4 Year Olds
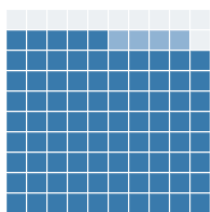
■ 89% At Least One Dose (8,203) ■ 62% At Least One Dose (30,513) ■ 42% At Least One Dose (2,219) ■ 12% At Least One Dose (230)

■ 85% Initial Series Complete (7,849) ■ 59% Initial Series Complete (28,847) ■ 43% Initial Series Complete (2,269) ■ 6% Initial Series Complete (113)
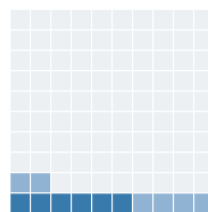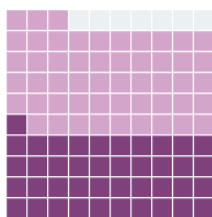
Boosters

The booster percentage shows what percent of people have at least one original booster or an updated booster, out of all of those who have finished their initial vaccination series.
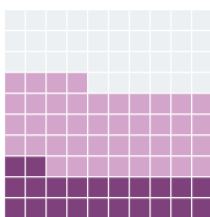
65+ Year Olds	18+ Year Olds	5-17 Year Olds	0-4 Year Olds

■ 94% At Least One Original Booster (7,302) ■ 64% At Least One Original Booster (18,528) ■ 43% At Least One Original Booster (980) ■ 4% *Updated Booster* (5)

■ 41% Updated Booster (3,218) ■ 22% Updated Booster (6,415) ■ 12% Updated Booster (270)
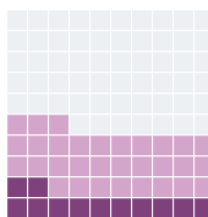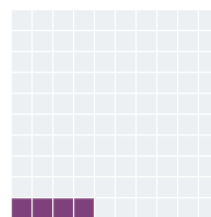
Watauga County COVID-19 Updates

(Community level data and guidance per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed January 6th, 2023)

COVID-19 Community Level: Medium

Guidance: Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines. Get tested if you have symptoms. Wear a mask if you have symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19. Wear a mask on public transportation. You may choose to wear a mask at any time as an additional precaution to protect yourself and others. If you are at high risk for severe illness, consider wearing a mask indoors in public and taking additional precautions.

Weekly Metrics Used to Determine the COVID-19 Community Level

|	
Case Rate per 100,000 population	256.33
New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population	8.9
% Staffed inpatient beds in use by patients with confirmed COVID-19	9%

COVID-19 Deaths:

(COVID-19 death data per North Carolina Health and Human Services, current as of 1/4/2023.)

The majority of COVID-19 related deaths occur among individuals who are unvaccinated. Staying up to date on vaccination, including boosters recommended by the CDC, remains the most effective way to prevent severe outcomes like severe illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

Deaths
All Time:
78 Total Deaths in Watauga County
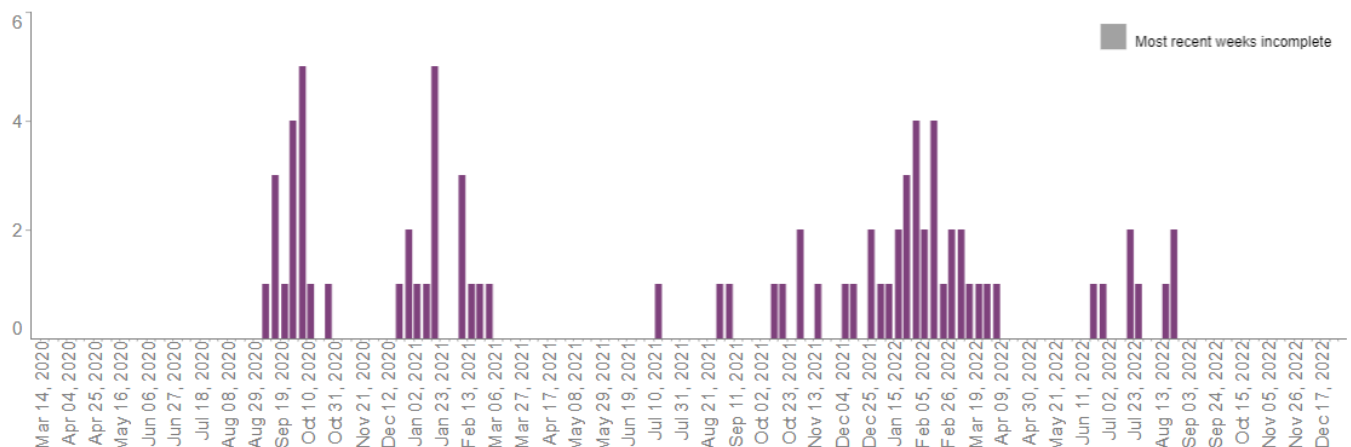
Regional COVID-19 Hospitalization Data

The hospitalization data reflects the number of COVID-19 patients newly admitted in the Triad Health Preparedness Coalition Region (THPC), which includes Watauga County. All hospitalization data is from NCDHHS' Hospitalization Data Dashboard.

Weekly Trend of Reported COVID-19 Confirmed Patients Newly Admitted

Age legend:
- 17 and Under
- 18-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80+
- Unknown
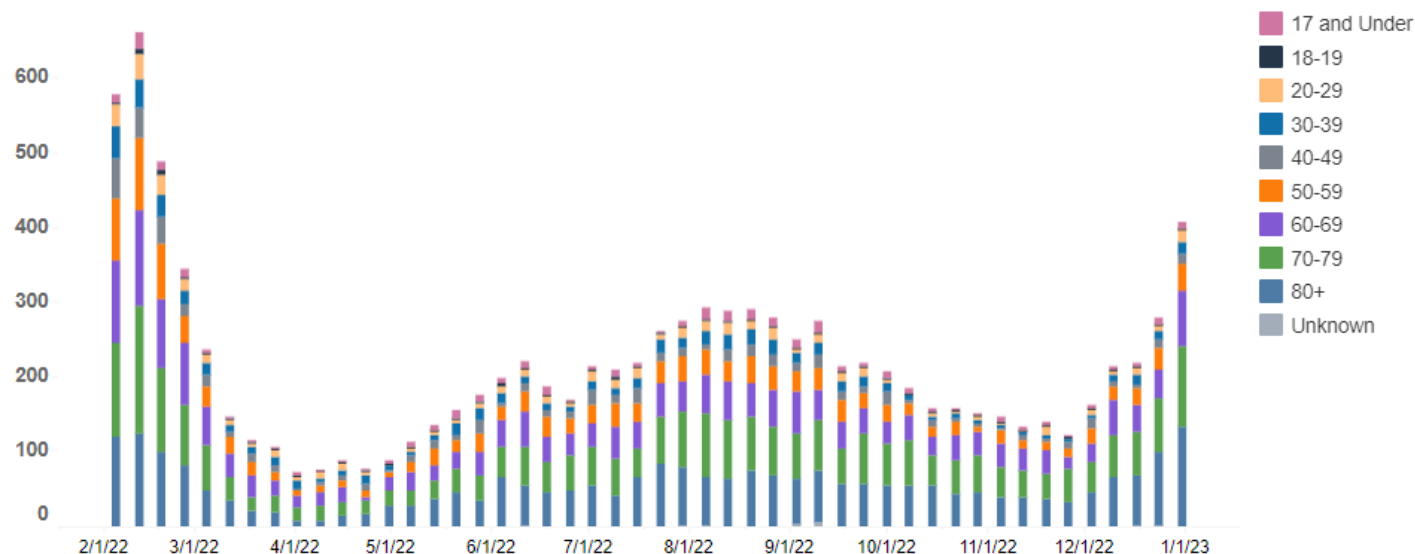
North Carolina COVID-19 Case Updates

North Carolina State Synopsis

The North Carolina COVID-19 State Synopsis can be viewed at: COVID-19 State Profile Report, which is provided by White House COVID-19 Team, Joint Coordination Cell, Data Strategy and Execution Workgroup.

COVID-19 Variants Detected in North Carolina by Week

The Omicron variants seem to spread more easily and quickly than other variants, which may lead to more cases of COVID-19. Current COVID-19 vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths from the COVID-19 variants.The best way to

What variants are being detected in North Carolina?
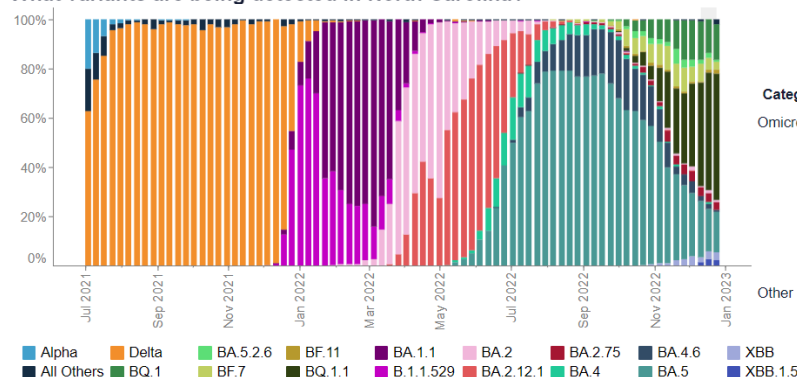
Last Two Weeks
Dec 11, 2022 - Dec 24, 2022

Category	Type	Sequenced Cases	% of Total
Omicron	BA.2	6	1.12%
	BA.2.75	20	3.73%
	BA.4	2	0.37%
	BA.4.6	10	1.87%
	BA.5	92	17.16%
	BF.7	25	4.66%
	BA.5.2.6	8	1.49%
	BF.11	6	1.12%
	BQ.1	74	13.81%
	BQ.1.1	260	48.51%
	XBB	16	2.99%
	XBB.1.5	15	2.80%
Other	All Others	2	0.37%

Legend: Alpha, Delta, BA.5.2.6, BF.11, BA.1.1, BA.2, BA.2.75, BA.4.6, XBB, All Others, BQ.1, BF.7, BQ.1.1, B.1.1.529, BA.2.12.1, BA.4, BA.5, XBB.1.5

protect yourself is by getting a COVID-19 vaccination, and booster once eligible.

Data on COVID-19 Variants Detected in North Carolina by Week was accessed from and can be viewed at: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' COVID-19 Surveillance Study.


State Wastewater Surveillance Data

NC Department of Health and Human Services is collecting wastewater samples from an increasing set of participating wastewater treatment plants across NC to test for levels of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Individuals infected with COVID-19 shed viral particles in their stool, which can be measured in wastewater. This metric will be increasingly important in measuring the amount of virus at the community level, as it provides information regarding the levels of virus independently of testing participation or reporting.

State wastewater surveillance data is from the NC DHHS dashboard, where it is updated weekly and can be accessed here.

22.5 Million ⟶ Previous Week 17.7 Million

COVID-19 Virus Particles Found in Wastewater

COVID-19 virus particles appearing in wastewater can signal how quickly the virus is spreading, even if people don't get tested or have symptoms.
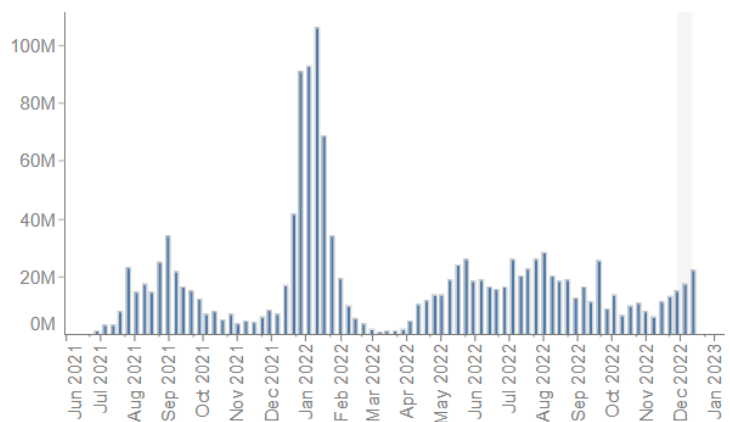
Average COVID-19 virus copies found per person per week from participating North Carolina wastewater treatment plants. *More Info*