

# As Omicron spreads quickly, a doctor says to consider most vulnerable over holidays

December 22 2021, by Jennifer Dixon

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

With the COVID-19 omicron variant spreading quickly across the country, the chief of infection prevention at one of Michigan's largest hospital systems urged state residents to consider the vulnerable among

us over the holidays.

"I'm not going to tell you not to have your holiday gatherings—instead I'm going to tell you to do your gatherings as safe as possible," Beaumont Health's Dr. Nick Gilpin told reporters Tuesday.

His suggestions: masking, social distancing, frequent hand-washing, stay home if you're sick, consider getting tested before traveling. And this:

"We need to think around the holidays about the people in our lives who are the most vulnerable and we should plan our holiday gatherings and get-togethers based on who those vulnerable individuals might be, plan your activities around that person," Gilpin said.

"I certainly want to bring a message of hope at this time of year," Gilpin said.

But he also delivered the bad news too:

The country is experiencing an extraordinary number of COVID-19 cases, and the number is climbing, Gilpin said.

"So things are certainly going in the wrong direction from a nationwide perspective," Gilpin said. "Statewide we are a little bit more stable."

Nevertheless, local numbers suggest there is still widespread transmission of COVID in the community, Gilpin said. Beaumont Health has approximately 580 patients in its eight hospitals, and while that number also is stable over the last few days there is still "a very significant amount of COVID within our [health care system](#)."

Gilpin said 23% of Beaumont's hospitalized patients are vaccinated, meaning the other 77% have not been vaccinated.

Based on recent data from most Michigan [health](#) systems, the Michigan Health & Hospital Association found that three out of four COVID patients are unvaccinated, 76%. Meanwhile, 87% of COVID patients in [intensive care](#) were unvaccinated and 88% of COVID ventilator patients were unvaccinated, according to a Dec. 2 news release from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

"The data is clear: If you are unvaccinated, you are risking hospitalization or death," said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. "We have a safe and effective vaccine that is quite literally saving lives. Michigan residents absolutely need to get vaccinated to keep their loved ones safe this holiday."

Vaccinated patients who are hospitalized tend to be [older adults](#), immune-compromised, or were vaccinated early on and may not have been boosted. "We know there's a tendency for vaccine protection to wane over time," Gilpin said.

"We're all getting pretty sick and tired of COVID," Gilpin said. And while some people may be done with COVID, he said, "it's pretty clear that COVID is not done with us just yet."

So the best protection, he said, "is to make sure you're getting vaccinated ... now is the time to get boosted. Especially as we're coming into the [holiday](#) season."

©2021 freep.com.

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: As Omicron spreads quickly, a doctor says to consider most vulnerable over holidays (2021, December 22) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-12-omicron-quickly-doctor-vulnerable-holidays.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.