



Norbert Goldfield, MD
Founder, CEO

Ask Nurses & Doctors LLC

72 Laurel Park
Northampton MA 01060
413-800-2680
norbert@asknursesdoctors.com
www.asknursesdoctors.com
@asknursesdoctors.com

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COVID Notes Fewer Covid Patients; 150 people Still Hospitalized; Wear a Mask?

I am having fewer Covid positive patients. But they are still coming. I sent one patient, fully vaccinated this morning to the ER who couldn't walk the 5 steps to her bathroom without getting winded. I had one symptomatic (vaccinated) patient this week who was my first patient I put on the oral anti-Covid medication Paxlovid. He is fine. No one has been hospitalized in the last month. Still almost 150 people were hospitalized at the local hospital. We now [know](#) that omicron is less serious than the other variants and that the vaccine protects. We also know that the effectiveness of the vaccine [degrades over time](#) but still very protective against ER visits and hospitalizations.

So are we now in an [endemic situation](#)? And what does that mean, anyways? [Leanne Wen MD](#) from the Washington Post: "I advise people to consider three questions in deciding whether to unmask in indoor, public places: What's your medical situation? How much do you want to avoid covid-19 infection? And how much does going maskless matter to you?" For myself, I am still wearing masks (only [n-95 or kn-95](#)) whenever I go inside a public space. I also don't spend time near people unless the establishment requires vaccination. I might change my mind on all these issues but that is where I am today. I [follow](#) the science but the reality is that the term is used by anti-vaxxers and vax supporters alike. That means I read a lot and try to be open.

Vaccines work. In the U.S., there were nearly four times as many positive cases for each death this year when compared to last winter's peak, according to a [new analysis](#). The U.S. vaccination rate for people over 65: 88 (Arkansas: 79; Vermont: 95). England : 96. The [Atlantic](#): "People see 90 and 95 percent as not very much" of a difference, says Adam Kucharski, an infectious-disease modeler at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He prefers to invert the number. "Think of it as: There's 5 percent unprotected or 10 percent unprotected." That doubles the pool of people over 65 who are at high risk for hospitalization and death. The Federal government should compare physicians, nursing homes and HMOs by Covid vaccine rate just like pneumococcal vaccine rate.

Most of us know people who have not been vaccinated. I agree with the National Academy of Medicine [approach](#). Please take a look – we can all do our part and gently, non-judgmentally, bringing new data all the time encourage the non-vaccinated to reconsider. I did it several times last week with patients who are not mine but I was seeing on an urgent basis for other problems. Here is info on an [excellent program](#).

What the future will bring is anyone's guess. But there was a [fourth wave](#) in 1920 during the "1918" flu that killed many. "The country's experience a century ago suggests that we could be in for a lot more pain — especially if we let our guard down." What does that mean practically. We need to [fight](#) against misinformation, better public health defense (including [examining wastewater](#) as one of the early potential signs of a Covid surge) in this country while disseminating vaccines as widely as possible throughout the world. Trust is key and [lack of trust in public health in the U.S. as compared](#) to many other countries predicted a poorer outcome. Ask Nurses and Doctors continues to fight on both and improve trust in public health.

What to make of these two headlines: Kaiser Permanente [broke its own profit record](#) in 2021. [Why Millions on Medicaid Are at Risk of Losing Coverage in the Months Ahead](#). The answer is straightforward- culturally we do not consider health care a common good. The result: a fragmented health care system. While I will never give up – the reality is that each of the fragments has distinct economic interests. Consider [mental health](#) and drug overdoses. You would think that we as a country could pull together on this issue and provide adequately paid mental health services to those needing services. But the insurance industry and many employer lobbyists (just 2 of the fragments) is [against](#) such an approach. These are top AND issues!!

Norbert Goldfield, M.D.