



# Live Well, Work Well

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## CDC ALERTS OF LATE SUMMER SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES

For the fourth summer in a row, the United States is experiencing an increase in COVID-19 cases. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows an increase in many COVID-19 indicators, along with wastewater data, that the virus is on the rise. Fortunately, this surge in cases doesn't seem to be driven by a new coronavirus variant.

This article explains the rise of COVID-19 cases occurring in late summer 2023.

### The Latest COVID-19 Surge

After nearly two months of steady declines, COVID-19 indicators are rising nationally, alarming CDC health experts. Common COVID-19 indicators, including hospital admissions, emergency department visits and test positivity, are slowly increasing. For example, hospitalization jumped 10% for the week ending July 15. While these increases vary nationwide, the virus appears to be spreading the least in the Midwest and the most in the country's southeastern states.

Although testing data has become more limited, wastewater surveillance can provide a consistent view of transmission trends over time. The CDC partnered with biotechnology firm Biobot Analytics for data about the concentration of coronavirus particles in sewage samples. The latest data revealed that it's about one-third of what it was this time last year.

Compounding concerns, COVID-19 isn't the only illness circulating this summer. Recent CDC data suggests that

other pathogens that can cause flu-like symptoms or stomach bugs—including adenovirus, norovirus and rotavirus—are circulating much higher this summer than last year.

The CDC is also tracking many cocirculating COVID-19 variants, which seem to be the second or third generation of the recombinant variant XBB. Each one carries a genetic difference that makes it slightly more contagious. However, these variations or evolutions are expected, and there hasn't been a surprising introduction of a new variant similar to what happened during the Omicron wave.

### What Can You Do?

Although a new coronavirus variant is not driving the latest COVID-19 cases, health experts note that immunity is waning. Most Americans have not had a COVID-19 booster shot in some time. A new booster shot that targets an XBB variant will be available in September, and Americans are urged to get the vaccine. Additionally, health experts recommend still wearing a mask when flying or using public transportation.



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Furthermore, you could take an at-home COVID-19 test before attending a crowded event to ensure you're not spreading the virus. This preventive measure could help protect those who may be most vulnerable, such as older adults and individuals who are immunocompromised.

If you are not feeling well and experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, staying home and getting tested is important. Fortunately, COVID-19 tests are readily available, making it easy to test yourself at home. Since there is some overlap between symptoms of cold- or flu-like illnesses and COVID-19, it may be difficult to determine what's making you sick without being tested. If necessary, call your doctor for further medical care.