

## VCHIP VDH COVID-19 Q&A Chat February 16, 2022

### Rapid Tests vs PCR Tests

**Q: I continue to hear about symptomatic people who have NEGATIVE rapid tests yet positive PCRs since Omicron, and wonder if others are hearing the same, and if there are any studies on this. One of my co-facilitators at Geisel had all five people in his house have this happen. It would really help to have up to date information on this.**

*A: William Raszka, MD, UVM Medical Center Children's Hospital & Larner COM Department of Pediatrics: We have always seen positive PCR results in patients recovering from COVID as the PCR is more sensitive. As for positive PCR negative antigen test at onset of illness, that has been hotly debated for the past six weeks. The data seems erratic. Some report a delay in positive results for those using the Ag test while the manufacturers are reporting similar sensitivity for Omicron as other variants.*

*A: William Raszka, MD, UVM Medical Center Children's Hospital & Larner COM Department of Pediatrics: Here is the data from a recent non-peer reviewed manuscript on the antigen tests (doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.12.18.21268018>). Basically, the antigen tests seem a somewhat less sensitive for Omicron vs. Delta and with highly variable results (for individual manufacturers). Keep in mind this was an in vitro study and cultured virus.*

*A: Thank you Bill. It feels like it would be helpful for everyone to know which rapid tests are currently more accurate.*

### Treatment

**C: William Raszka, MD, UVM Medical Center Children's Hospital & Larner COM Department of Pediatrics: Bebtelovimab got EUA for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 in adults and pediatric patients at least 12 years of age who are at high risk for severe disease.**

### In the News

**C: A news channel reached out to me about a story they are doing about "the effects of masking." That is all I was told about the story. I am going to do the story to get on and say there has not been any adverse effects of masking (except for the dreaded maskne!) But just wanted to make sure I am not missing any studies that show anything different. Thanks**

**C: Lewis First was on the local news last night (NBC) discussing masks and children. Addressing no concerns with speech and language development.**

**C: Thanks, it was NBC that asked me to do the story so I will have to just reiterate exactly what Dr. First said!**

**Q: Did I glimpse correctly that <12 yo moderate symptoms was listed twice? Once in first box and again in second box?**

*A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP: (verbally): We'll review that edited document.*

### Calculating Vaccine Rate

**Q: My understanding is that the instruction for calculating the vaccination rate in a school is to calculate for vaccine eligible students. Is there a reason not to calculate rate of vaccination using all vaccine eligible students and staff in the building as a group?**

*A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP: (verbally): I remember this conversation from months ago when the 80% was first initiated. Could the health department remind us of why they chose students and not students and staff? We need an update on this.*

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**Q: Using vaccination rate as a marker of not masking kids in schools is problematic seeing that high quality masking does better than vaccination alone in preventing spread during Omicron. I also worry that are lower positivity rate is due to many testing at home and not reporting their results to VDH. My kids have no problem masking and play indoor competitive soccer with kn95 masks, so not wearing a mask does not impact mental health, being in school improves mental health and we know that masks work.**

*A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP: (verbally): We'll draw your attention to the statement that Becca Bell shared with superintendents yesterday about the value of masking.*

*A: Ilisa Stalberg, Vermont Department of Health: Re vaccine rate: I don't fully remember either. I think that it is partly due to availability of data. I also think that AOE is operating under some information that the % of staff vaccinated in schools is very high.*

*A: Thanks Ilisa -We have the data for our staff, and thinking about the concept of herd immunity, it seems to make sense to include everyone. I am in a district where we will never get to 80% on students alone.*

**Q: Can we get a copy of this letter sent to the Superintendents?**

**Q: Does anyone have links to Dr. First's story or Dr. Bell's statement?**

*A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP: (verbally): Yes. It both will be available in tonight's email. Becca Bell's statement was also sent through VSSNA.*

### Vaccine Sites

**Q: Regarding closure of bigger vaccine sites, what if people are already scheduled for the end of March for their booster?**

*A: Monica Ogelby, Vermont Department of Health: Any existing clinics scheduled and with appointments will not be impacted. You'll just see out beyond March clinics will be reduced in size/frequency/length based on demand and other access points.*

### Data Sharing

*C: Please, Please include the school nurse EMR (SNAP) in the data sharing with the IMR.*

### Vaccine Effectiveness & Hospitalizations

**Q: Has there been any data collected about how effective the COVID vaccine has been against symptomatic infection in the 5-12 year during the Omicron surge. I feel like in my population it has been far less than the 90% reported during the clinical trials (which were primarily conducted during delta). Data on whether vaccination significantly decreased hospitalizations in the 5-12 year old age group?**

*A: Merideth Plumpton, RN, Vermont Department of Health:*

[https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7107e4.htm?s\\_cid=mm7107e4\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7107e4.htm?s_cid=mm7107e4_w)

*Hospitalizations of Children and Adolescents with Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19 — COVID-NET, 14 States, July 2021–January 2022*

*A: William Raszka, MD, UVM Medical Center Children's Hospital & Larner COM Department of Pediatrics: I cannot comment on symptomatic infection but the relative risk of hospitalization or severe disease is lower after vaccination*

### Masking

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**Q: We are getting push back to change our mask policy. We are told there is a growing support in school to abandon masks even if schools are not at 80%. Can we get letter of support to continue masks in school as recommended by VDH and DOE?**

*A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP: (verbally): We'll draw your attention to Becca Bell's statement that went to all superintendents yesterday. We recognize that it would be the right language to have that dialogue at the local school district level, which is now where this decision is heading.*

*A: Some schools will never get to 80% and may opt to unmask anyway due to community pressure. Hearing it already....*