

How are we doing with Omicron? When and how to get tested?

As we all know, Omicron is highly transmissible and infection rates are up at Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and across the globe. Omicron is replacing other strains of SARS-CoV-2, and is rapidly becoming the dominant strain in British Columbia.



The very good news is that VCH staff continue to be well-protected at work.



How do we know?

While a larger proportion of health care worker (HCW) infections is being recorded in the community, infection rates among HCWs continue to be lower or parallel to the background community, despite HCWs being tested more.

(See Figure 1 for incidence; and Figure 2 for positivity rates)

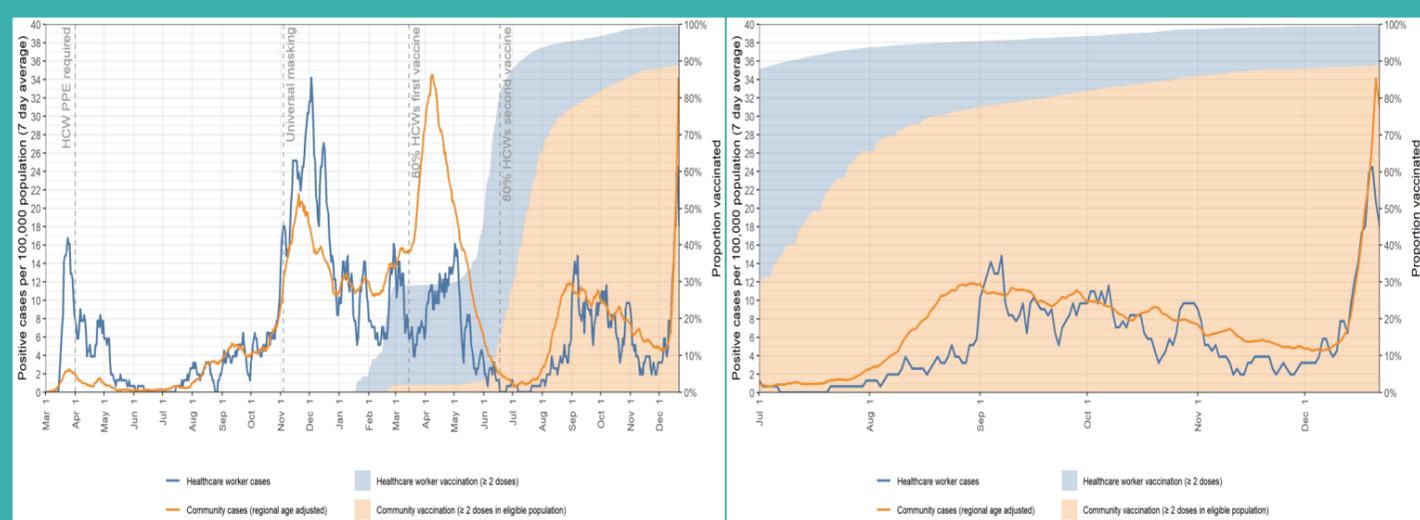


Figure 1- Incidence of +PCR in HCWs (blue) & community (orange)

Close up of period since June 1, 2021

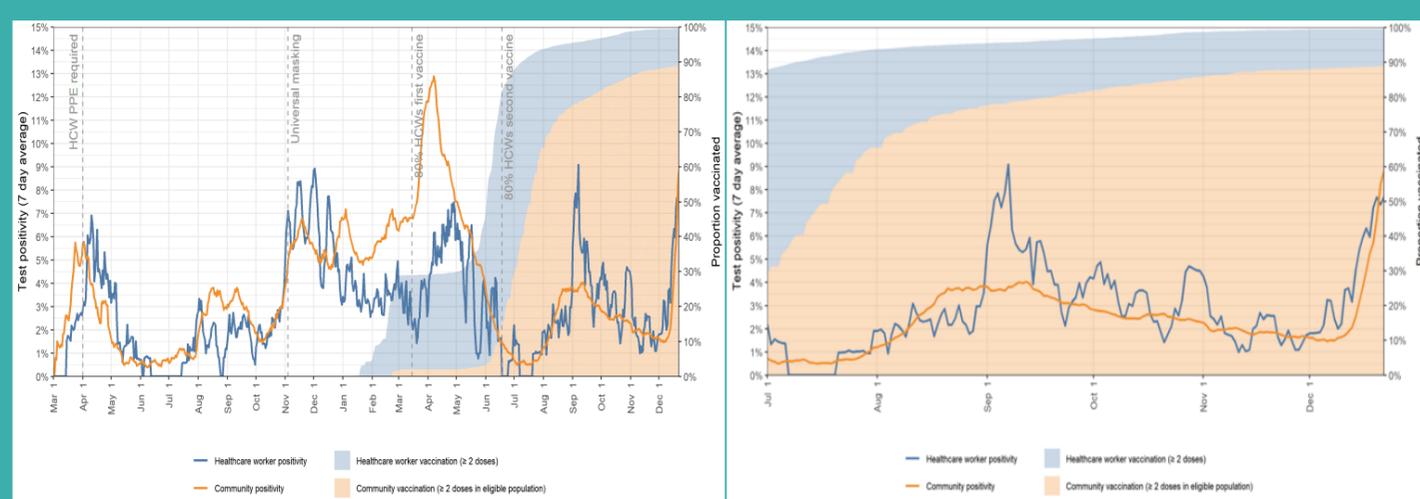


Fig 2 – Positivity rates of HCWs and community

Close up of period since June 1, 2021

Also, POSH calls every single medical staff member who tests positive, to ensure their needs are met, and inquires about possible workplace exposures. The vast majority of infections to date have resulted from **community and household rather than workplace exposure** (and tend to be mild and short in duration).

Being fully vaccinated - **key to prevent serious disease** - doesn't completely protect from getting infected and transmitting to others.

So it's important to continue to follow Public Health and Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) recommendations to mask, keep physically distant, avoid large social events and crowded indoor situations.

We will continue to monitor to ensure appropriate availability and advice for personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers.



How to get tested (expediently)? The role for rapid antigen tests (RAT):



- If symptomatic, VCH staff and medical staff should go to a testing centre where you may receive a RAT kit instead of a PCR, depending on assessment of vulnerability.
- If you receive a RAT kit and test positive, please report your result to Public Health [here](#).
- Medical staff who test positive are also requested to contact POSH via posh.covid@ubc.ca for advice and follow-up.
- A negative RAT does not need to be reported, unless otherwise instructed by Public Health.
- If you are asymptomatic, do not seek testing, except if requested by Public Health, for example, in an outbreak.
- If you develop symptoms at work, please speak to the unit manager or your department or division head to see if peer-to-peer PCR testing is possible.

