



# "Digest This"

A monthly newsletter from Dr. Carey Strom, MD, FASGE

**July 19, 2022**

**My dear patients:**

Just as we thought we were "out of the woods", there seems to be a spike in the new omicron variant, BA.5 which is the most predominant circulating variant presently in the USA. Due to its inability to evade immunity from previous infections or vaccinations, stifling the hopes of a COVID pandemic reprieve, this subvariant is more likely to reinfect patients previously vaccinated or infected. It is driving a wave of new infections across the country with a daily average of a 100,000 new cases per day. This may represent a gross undercount of new cases since many are doing home testing and are not reporting to government agencies. Some experts estimate for every one reported case there are seven to ten unreported. Presently, the positivity rate of people getting tested seems to be over 40% which is the highest rate that we have experienced. It appears this new variant is like a new virus. Prior to the emergence of this variant and the family of subvariants, reinfection was vary rare. But don't despair, your previous infection with Covid-19 and/or vaccinations will portend some immunity and most likely prevent you from severe disease. We still must be concerned about long Covid with multiple Covid-19 infections. You're also probably aware Los Angeles and New York are considering reinstating the mask mandate for indoor spaces. People have let down their guard regarding Covid precautions. As the virus continues to circulate there is a real risk of further mutations, meaning we will likely be living with this for the foreseeable future.

Not to make things worse, there has been two new omicron subvariants identified, which are BA2.75 and BA5.21 which are mostly not in the USA. These are competing with BA.5 (the most predominant circulating variant in the USA) and BA.2.

As of now, second boosters (a fourth shot) are offered to adults over 50 and those 12 or older who are immunocompromised. The FDA and CDC are considering expanding eligibility of a second booster (fourth shot) to adults under the age of 50 to counter waning immunity amid a wave of new infections and increasing hospitalization rates.

I know many of you may be waiting to get the new "bivalent" booster which elicits significant higher antibodies against omicron subvariant BA.4 and BA.5. This booster may be available this fall, but the real question is are those two variants that are very prominent now also going to be the prominent variants in the fall when the vaccination is supposed to roll out? So, the real question is, what should one do now? I would recommend a fourth shot if you have major comorbidities and are on many medications. I don't really see the downside. If we knew for sure that the present BA.4 and BA.5 variants are going to be the most prevalent variants when the new booster arrives, I would say to wait but this is an unknown, but I would certainly say get vaccinated with at least three shots. I know there is rapid movement in all aspects of Covid but we will have to follow the science for further recommendations.

As always, if you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

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If you liked our newsletters or would like to hear about another topic, please let us know!

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Many patients have been apprehensive about routine health maintenance during the pandemic despite our vigilant safety protocol. We understand! Therefore, you have the option of telemedicine visits. Our office has been 100% fully vaccinated. When you schedule your visit in-person, we have you wait outside on the plaza level until the examination room is open for you to enter so you don't have to wait in the waiting room. Also, feel free to call our office to see if you are up-to-date on your health maintenance, including colonoscopy and/or upper endoscopy.

As per your request, we have updated our website and now have the option to facilitate online bill payments, which can be accessed by clicking the link below or going to our website at <http://doctorstrom.com/contact-us/> and then scroll down to the "Pay Now" button. On our website, you can also make appointments, sign-up your friends/colleagues/family members for our newsletter, and download required patient registration forms to make your visit more efficient.

- <http://doctorstrom.com/contact-us/>

We have updated our database and we would prefer if you go to our website and click the "Patient Form" tab and fill out the forms on "Welcome to Our Practice, New Patient Form Registration, and Telehealth Form Consent," and either scan them to us at [info@doctorstrom.com](mailto:info@doctorstrom.com) or fax to us at (310)-285-0482.

If you know someone that did not receive our newsletters or updates and would like to receive them, please let us know at [info@doctorstrom.com](mailto:info@doctorstrom.com). This email address is informational only, and not intended for medical advice.

Warm regards,

Carey B. Strom, MD, FASGE

Associate Clinical Professor, UCLA School of Medicine

Carey B. Strom, MD, FASGE

8631 W. 3rd St, Suite 1017E

Los Angeles, CA 90048

**310.550.0400**

310.285.0482 Fax

[www.doctorstrom.com](http://www.doctorstrom.com)