

Monday, January 3, 2022

For immediate release

**An Urgent [Joint] Message from the Massachusetts College of Emergency Physicians (MACEP) [and
Massachusetts Emergency Nurses Association (MENA)]**

**We are overwhelmed.
Emergency Departments are at a breaking point.**

Our Emergency Departments are at critical capacity and things will get worse.
Waiting rooms are overflowing and hospital admission beds are limited throughout Massachusetts.

In the coming days and weeks, we will see more nurses, doctors, and support staff become infected and stay home to isolate and get well. This situation will challenge our Emergency Departments and hospitals even more.

Let us be clear, we do not want you to ignore your symptoms or avoid emergency care when needed. **You will be safely cared for despite the growing volume of patients with COVID-19.**

However, we ask you **NOT** to use Emergency Departments for routine testing for COVID-19 exposures or mild symptoms. Doing so is overwhelming our departments and staff and diverting our focus away from those who need us most.

So many of our sickest patients come to us unexpectedly: car crashes, injuries, strokes, heart attacks, appendicitis, behavioral health crises. Injury or illness might happen to a family member; it might happen to any one of us, at any time.

We ask you to help protect the Emergency Department safety net by working together and doing your part to reduce the spread of COVID-19, specifically Omicron.

Today we ask you to:

- Get vaccinated and get your booster. Omicron protection requires a booster.
- If you feel sick, isolate per CDC guidelines; get tested for COVID-19 at a test site or with an at-home test.
- Don't use Emergency Departments for routine testing for COVID-19 if you've only been exposed or have mild symptoms.
- During this Omicron surge, wear a mask around others (even if you're vaccinated) and socially distance.

We can only get through this crisis if we all do our part. We're in this together.