



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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December 3, 2021

Health Officials Urge Booster Shots for Older Americans to Combat Omicron Variant

Officials are preparing for another possible surge in COVID-19 infections now that the [Omicron variant](#) is circulating and colder winter months approach. **President Biden** has said that the new variant is a [cause for concern but not alarm](#) and health experts still cite vaccination as the best way to protect oneself from the disease.



Scientists have found that the COVID-19 vaccines lose efficacy over time, and all Americans who were vaccinated more than 6 months ago should receive an additional booster shot.

[Over 25 percent](#) of Americans over the age of 65 have received their booster dose, and nearly [two million](#) of those recipients got their booster within the past 14 days. The vaccines are most effective in protecting seniors and other

individuals at high-risk for severe COVID-19 infection. With booster shots now available for all adults, seniors can receive an added layer of protection against Omicron and other variants of COVID-19.

There are many ways to find vaccine/booster providers in the United States. You can visit vaccines.gov, text your ZIP code to 438829 or call 1-800-232-0233 to find the closest vaccination site near you.

“We encourage seniors to take the advice of the CDC and their physicians,” said **Richard Fiesta**, executive director of the Alliance. “In the face of an ever-changing pandemic, boosters can provide an added layer of protection for everyone.”

Tell Senators: Pass the Build Back Better Act Now

The U.S. Senate is preparing to bring the Build Back Better Act, which was [passed in the U.S. House](#) in November, to the floor before the end of the year.

The House version would provide much-needed relief for seniors and working Americans. It will cap insulin prices for all patients at \$35 a month, add guaranteed hearing coverage (including hearing aids) to traditional Medicare, and allow Medicare to negotiate lower prices for some drugs. This fits with older Americans' priorities, [which include drug price negotiation](#) and Medicare hearing coverage.

[Please sign our petition to demand the Senate vote YES on the bill passed by the House.](#)

“We need to get this bill over the finish line and on President Biden’s desk for signature. Each of the provisions affecting older Americans are critical, and must be included,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, president of the Alliance. “Retirees can’t wait any longer for relief from high insulin and other drug prices.”

Older Homeowners Experience Surge in Predatory Solicitations

As a historic housing shortage tightens the market, more homebuilders, real estate companies, and other speculators [are using aggressive methods](#) to try and persuade people to sell their homes.

Tactics include incessant phone calls and voice messages (including to homeowners' relatives), hand-delivered postcards, and threatening mailings. More predatory buyers tend to include a free no-obligation offer as part of their strategy so they can get prospective sellers on the hook, and they also often use [urgent and/or “too-good-to-be-true”](#) language.



Experts say that elderly and low-income homeowners are common targets for these solicitations. Seniors can protect themselves by ignoring or being cautious when responding to direct solicitations, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau also [has resources](#) to protect older adults from fraud.

“Be very cautious if you receive an unsolicited offer to purchase your home,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, secretary-treasurer of the Alliance. “If you do plan to sell, you can protect yourself by going through the traditional process of listing your house on the market, receiving multiple offers, and then choosing the best one for you and your family.”

KHN: For Older Adults, Smelling the Roses May Be More Difficult

By Judith Graham

The reports from covid-19 patients are disconcerting. Only a few hours before, they were enjoying a cup of pungent coffee or the fragrance of flowers in a garden. Then, as if a switch had been flipped, those smells disappeared.

Young and old alike are affected — more than 80% to 90% of those diagnosed with the virus, according to some estimates. While most people recover in a few months, 16% take half a year or longer to do so, research has found. According to new estimates, up to 1.6 million Americans have chronic smell problems due to covid.

Seniors are especially vulnerable, experts suggest. “We know that many older adults have a compromised sense of smell to begin with. Add to that the insult of covid, and it made these problems worse,” said **Dr. Jayant Pinto**, a professor of surgery and specialist in sinus and nasal diseases at the University of Chicago Medical Center.

Recent data highlights the interaction between covid, advanced age and loss of smell. When Italian researchers evaluated 101 patients who’d been hospitalized for mild to moderate covid, 50 showed objective signs of smell impairment six months later. Those 65 or older were nearly twice as likely to be impaired; those 75 or older were more than 2½ times as likely.

[Read more here.](#)

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of over 4.4 million retirees and their families.