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Stop the Spread: Masks, Vaccines, and 6 Feet

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected lives worldwide for more than two years. The CDC reported guidelines to prevent the disease from spreading such as wearing masks in public, getting vaccinated, and keeping six feet of distance. The impact that this virus has on the unvaccinated and those who do not wear their masks is much higher than those who take these preventative measures. With the increasing rates of Omicron and other variants, it is essential for these preventative measures to be taken.

My father, a lung and ICU physician in the Bronx has witnessed an increase of patients in the ICU who are sick of Omicron, and the majority of them that were sick or dying were unvaccinated. According to [WebMD](#), those who are unvaccinated have more of a risk of getting COVID-19 repeatedly. This further indicates how important it is for people to get vaccinated. The [CDC](#) also indicates that COVID-19 incidence rates and deaths are much more frequent in unvaccinated individuals and people who didn't take their booster shot. Between April-December 2021, there were approximately [3,945,523](#) more COVID-19 cases among those who were unvaccinated than fully vaccinated individuals 18 years and older.

This given data just showcases how important this issue is and how vital getting vaccinated is. Everyone older than the age of 5 is eligible for the [COVID-19](#) vaccine in the United States. For adults, the first dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine must be taken and then the second one should be taken after at least 2 weeks. According to [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#), after being fully vaccinated by getting either two doses of the Pfizer vaccine or the Moderna Vaccine, or one dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, people above the age of 12 are eligible for a booster a couple months later. A booster is recommended since the effects of the vaccine have been seen to wear off after 2 months.

Getting vaccinated isn't the only way to help stop the spread. Masks should be worn in public spaces for your own safety, as well as [socially distancing](#) yourself from other individuals. The [New England Journal of Medicine](#) published an experiment that involved testing the transmission of oral droplets with or without the face mask, concluding that these droplets can't be transmitted with a mask, preventing the spread. In [Health Affairs](#), the COVID-19 rates decreased after the mask mandate. The daily growth rate slowed by 0.9% in the first five days after a mask mandate. Also, the [CDC](#) states that socially distancing reduces the transmission of

virus between people. Finally, if people are sick, they should stay home to the best of their ability to eliminate the risk of transmission.

These preventative measures are even more important for the people who are at a higher risk of getting COVID-19, such as the [immunocompromised](#) and the elderly. If the disease keeps spreading, it will be these groups that will be more disadvantaged.

A pandemic is a community effort instead of just an individual one. This involves people in every community and even if a small portion of society is against something, the entire movement can take over. Compliance by all is required to completely help society. These preventative measures aren't just about preventing the spread of the virus to yourself but transmission to and from others.

The [CDC](#) provides accessible articles online that anyone can access. Additional steps that may be taken to advocate for the prevention of the spread of COVID can be through posters in public places, health awareness in school especially for the younger children, awareness at jobs, primary care physician advocates, and parents and counselors educating themselves and their loved ones.

Since the beginning of this pandemic, there has been an increase of “anti-maskers” and “anti-vaxxers.” These are individuals that believe that being forced to wear a mask or get vaccinated takes away from their individual freedom and rights. Although science should surpass their beliefs, it has been hard to convince these groups that masks and vaccines are the way back to our “normal” lives. Freedom argument - Science rejects that. According to an [Advanced in Therapy by Springer](#) mentions the freedom argument that anti-maskers bring up. These groups should be aware of the benefits and should listen to guidelines that are actually beneficial for their individual health and public health.

More positive societal health outcomes in terms of COVID can only happen through the collaboration of physicians, government, and society. Each group has its individual role in helping to stop the spread of the virus. Primary care physicians specifically can assist in distributing easy to read pamphlets regarding the importance of getting vaccinated or wearing a mask, and should consistently tell everyone this, especially those of lower socioeconomic groups because they may not be able to learn this information elsewhere. The government should propagate the importance of preventative measures much more by outlining the benefits instead of just mandating an act. Finally, society, and individuals can help by bringing upon awareness among their community, and helping people understand that vaccines, masks, and social distancing is the only way to help stop the spread.

Society, healthcare workers, and the government must work together to eliminate a deadly virus from spreading even more. Only with better awareness of the CDC guidelines, can we return back to the “normal” we had prior to March 2020 in the United States. We can protect society, protect those at higher-risk, and return back to our daily activities without any restrictions.