

### Does the vaccine mean no more masking?

Since the pandemic started in 2020, SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 has constantly changed and accumulated mutations in its genetic code. In January 2022, the Omicron variant had overtaken the Delta variant as the dominant strain in the US in less than 1 month. Unlike Delta, Omicron seems to cause much higher numbers of breakthrough cases in vaccinated people. In addition to being fully vaccinated and getting a booster, the most effective way to reduce exposure to Omicron is to wear a mask. Masks will reduce the chances of getting infected and reduce the severity of infection.

## Protecting Yourself from Omicron Nothing new but redouble your efforts

### COVID-19 Vaccine

- o Get yourself and any family members five years old or above immunized now
- o Get a booster dose if you are 6 months or more from your primary series of Pfizer or Moderna or 2 months from J7J/Janssen
- o Start a series now even if you won't be back in the 3-4 weeks for your second dose

### Other measures

- o Masks while
  - o At least triple layer (or a KN95 if you want maximal protection)
- o Distancing
- o Avoid large crowds, especially indoors
  - o >6 feet when possible
  - o Minimize time of closer contact
- o Hand washing
- o Get tested if you have symptoms

<https://www.state.gov/wearing-a-mask-and-the-omicron-variant/>

### Which mask protects best against the Omicron variant?

CDC states loosely woven cloth products provide the least protection, layered finely woven products offer more protection, well-fitting disposable surgical masks and KN95s offer even more protection, and well-fitting NIOSH-approved respirators (including N95s) offer the highest level of protection. N95s masks filter out 95% of particles in the air and can be found online or in some retail stores. But the CDC also makes it clear that whatever the type, the most important thing is to wear a well-fitting mask consistently.



Photo from NBC Bay Area TV

Free N95 masks issued by the US government are now available at most US pharmacies and grocery stores nationwide while supplies last. Every person is allowed up to 3 free masks.

• <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html>  
 • <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/25/1075640873/free-n95-masks-covid>

### Food Truck Special:

**Food truck operations can often create unique challenges from a food safety standpoint.**



Lebanon: Mobile Exchange 1958. Exchange photo.

Particularly with critical areas such as maintaining proper cold-holding temperatures and supplying potable water. It is crucial to obtain approval from the local Regulatory Authority **BEFORE** operating any food truck on an installation. Whether the food truck is a direct-run operation or a concession, all requirements for a food operation apply:

1. Person in Charge (PIC) must have current food manager certification (Tri-Service Food Code Section 2-1), and all employees must meet initial and annual training requirements (TSFC Section 2-5).
2. All food prepared on site - No food may be brought from a residence. Any products prepared in advance must come from a commercial facility approved by the local military Regulatory Authority.
3. Approved Sources - All ingredients used must be from Approved Sources (TSFC Paragraph 3-201.11). Foods must be: 1) Approved Sources Directory listed, 2) specifically exempt from Directory listing by commodity, or 3) from a facility inspected by a federal agency identified in the Directory (meat and meat products used must bear the USDA label, i.e. they can't come from a retail store unless product bears the USDA label).
4. Hand washing - Capability to include a functional and properly stocked handwashing sink (TSFC Section 5-203.11). Lack of a handwashing sink must be approved in advance by the local military Regulatory Authority and is applicable only to operations with minimal food contact such as sale of fully sealed packaged items.
5. Potable Water - At a minimum, meet applicable requirements of TSFC Sections 5-3 and 5-4 to ensure adequate supply of potable water as well as proper disposal of waste and wastewater.
6. Food Temperature Control - Adequate capability to provide cold holding and hot holding to meet the temperature requirements of TSFC Paragraph 3-501.16.
7. Expiration Dates - Must not serve or carry outdated or expired food and meet all other requirements of TSFC Chapter 3.
8. Vehicle must meet all applicable construction requirements of TSFC Chapter 6 and maintain the vehicle under clean and sanitary conditions.

## [In which season is infestation most severe?](#)



Rodent infestations can lead to foodborne outbreaks such as Salmonellosis & Product Recalls.

It's that time of the year again for those pesky rodents to be searching for shelter from the cold. What better place than a food facility? Keeping these critters out of your facilities can be challenging. A rat can fit through an opening as small as a quarter, while a mouse can squeeze through a hole smaller than a dime. Rodents can be a huge problem because they can contaminate food, destroy property, and spread serious diseases. Therefore, it is important to be vigilant and proactive to keep these pesky critters from taking control.

How do you keep them out? We're glad you asked:

- [Install screens](#) over vents and openings
- [Dispose of garbage](#) regularly
- [Seal cracks and holes](#) including areas where utilities and pipes enter the building
- [Replace loose mortar](#) and weather stripping around basement foundations and windows
- [Install gutters](#) or diverters to channel water away from buildings
- [Store items in plastic](#) sealed containers versus cardboard boxes
- [Install weather strips](#) at the bottom of exterior doors
- [Keep doors closed](#) when not in use
- [Plant vegetation away](#) (at least 12 inches) from the perimeter of the building. Trim tree branches to prevent them from hanging over the roof

*\*Contact pest management immediately if you find rodent feces, hear sounds of scurrying in the walls or observe structural damage consistent with rodent activity.*

### **Tag Team with Local Installation Preventive Medicine/Public Health to Maximize Safety.**

Good communication is the key to a safe and successful AAFES operation. Please keep in mind that both you and the PH/PM/VI personnel have the same goal: **Keeping customers safe!** Installation PH/PM/VI personnel should be working with you as a team to ensure that food products and barber/beauty/spa operations are safe for beneficiaries. These same PH/PM/VI personnel are also great points of contact for relevant employee training.

The Exchange Food Safety Team is here to enhance collaboration between you and your installation PH/PM/VI personnel. We are subject matter experts with the ability to communicate and mediate between Exchange SBMs/GMs and military inspectors at all levels to get to the best possible solutions. Develop and maintain your relationship with your inspectors by utilizing this valuable resource!

For further questions concerning rodent infestations an excellent resource is the Armed Forces Pest Management

- <https://www.acq.osd.mil/eie/afpmb/afpmb.html#directory>

## [Did you know AAFES has opened Tattoo Studios?](#)

The Exchange has opened **tattoo studios** at select locations. Tattoo services are extremely popular amongst the military population.



Approximately 26% of recruits have tattoos preceding enlistment. Over 66% of males and 34% of females in the military have tattoos. The Exchange has so far opened three tattoo studios located Nellis AFB, MacDill AFB, and Fort Bliss. The benefits of having a tattoo studio on military installations are to ensure compliance of Army and Air Force regulations related to what can be tattooed and where it can be tattooed (piercing services are not permitted), to ensure compliance of Army and Air Force regulations related to sanitation and hygiene and enforce the strictest quality of care.

### [The Exchange Food Safety & Defense Internet Portal:](#)

Are you looking for past newsletters on food safety, food defense and barber/beauty/spa sanitation? Previous editions are found by accessing either of the Staff Vet/Food & Drug Safety links at the end of this newsletter. Associates are also able to consult the site for quick access to commonly required AF and DA regulations, references, Exchange policies, and guidance.

- [Past Exchange Public Health Newsletters](#)

### [Useful links \(control-click to use links\):](#)

- [Worldwide Directory for Sanitarily Approved Food Establishments for Armed Forces Procurement](#)

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