



Eastern Idaho Public Health

1250 Hollipark Drive • Idaho Falls, ID 83401 • Phone: (208) 522-0310 • www.EIPH.Idaho.gov

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Mimi Taylor
Office: (208) 521-6722

EIPH Urges COVID-19 Vaccination to Protect Children, Adults, and Hospital Capacity; Hospitals Increasingly Burdened Due to Influx of COVID-19 Cases

(EASTERN IDAHO) - With COVID-19 cases increasing in Idaho due to the circulation of the highly contagious Delta Variant, hospitals throughout the state are becoming overwhelmed but doing all they can to continue to provide the level of care that every individual expects to receive when needing hospital care. Unfortunately, across Idaho, we are quickly approaching the level of hospitalized patients that we saw last November and December, yet have already surpassed the number of patients in Intensive Care Units compared to last year. This is stressing our healthcare resources statewide. As COVID-19 cases continue to increase and result in more people needing to be hospitalized, this could mean that our state will need to enact Crisis Standards of Care, which is a framework that has been developed to provide hospitals and healthcare providers with guidance for scarce resource allocation in the event that demand for healthcare resources exceeds the supply—a situation we are inching closer to by the day across our State.

This surge in cases statewide also coincides with the return to school for our children. While the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is available to the majority of Idahoans, it is not yet available to children under 12 years of age, which leaves them more vulnerable to contracting the disease. Our plea to everyone is to do all you can, including getting vaccinated, to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in an effort to protect yourself, our children, and our healthcare capacity.

Why Should I Get Vaccinated?

Currently, the Delta variant of the virus is the predominant strain circulating in our state and it is much more transmissible than the original virus. While the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines is not as high against the Delta variant, being fully vaccinated greatly reduces your risk of getting severely ill, being admitted to the hospital, or dying from all currently circulating strains of COVID-19. Also, the risk is much lower than the risk for unvaccinated people.

Where Can I Get Vaccinated?

EIPH, as well as many other providers across our region, offer the full FDA approved Pfizer/Comirnaty vaccine (for ages 16 and older) and the Pfizer vaccine for children ages 12-15, still currently under an Emergency Use Authorization. We also have the Moderna vaccine available for people ages 18 and older, which has completed its application for full FDA approval. Please call 208-533-3223 to schedule an

appointment for the vaccine of your choice. The vaccine is offered to you at no cost, regardless of your residency and citizenship. You can also search www.vaccines.gov/search/ to find vaccination opportunities near you or walk into most pharmacies in the region.

What Else Can I Do?

With increasing pediatric cases of COVID-19 and children under the age of 12 not being eligible for vaccination yet, along with others that are not able to be vaccinated, it is critically important to follow public health recommendations to reduce transmission of the virus to our vulnerable populations. This includes:

- Correctly wearing a mask indoors regardless of your vaccination status when you are not able to physically distance from others. Correctly means wearing a mask that fits snugly against your face and fully covers your nose and mouth.
- Except to seek medical attention, staying home when 1) experiencing symptoms of illness, 2) diagnosed with COVID even if you're asymptomatic, 3) pending a COVID-19 test result, and 4) directed to do so by public health due to exposure.
- Maintaining space between yourself and others.
- Avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces.
- Washing hands or using hand sanitizer.

Testing Resources:

EIPH has a supply of VAULT at-home COVID-19 tests available to individuals free of charge. This PCR test involves an individual collecting his/her own saliva with the virtual assistance of a VAULT medical observer. The sample is then mailed to a laboratory in a postage paid envelope that is provided with the test kit. Electronic test results are generally available within 24-72 hours. The VAULT tests are available in each of EIPH's offices in our 8-county region. If you need a test, please call (208) 533-3219 and talk with EIPH staff for instructions **BEFORE** reporting to an EIPH office to pick up a test. In addition, the VAULT tests can be requested by calling the Idaho Careline at 2-1-1. The test will be mailed to your home.

For continued situational awareness, EIPH continues to update our COVID-19 Data Dashboard Monday through Friday. On this dashboard, we report the rate of active cases of COVID-19 in Bonneville, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison, and Teton Counties. With the 2020 Census numbers becoming finalized, in the coming days we will be adjusting the population numbers used to compute our COVID-19 case rates in the health district, so you may see the active rates change regardless of the current active cases reported.

If you are not already doing so, we encourage you to follow EIPH's Facebook page for the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 as well as many other health topics.

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