



# Eastern Idaho Public Health

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Eastern Idaho Public Health (EIPH) Urges Everyone to Make the Choices Needed to Slow the Spread of COVID-19 in our Communities**

(EASTERN IDAHO) – September was a rough month in the communities served by EIPH. We saw increasing COVID-19 cases with the largest increase coming in school aged children. We reported 32 deaths from September 9 to September 30, many of them being younger and healthier than those who died during the peak in November and December 2020. People are continuing to suffer the effects of Long COVID. And sadly, Crisis Standards of Care were implemented throughout the state due to the overwhelming burden placed on our hospitals due to the increased cases of COVID-19 requiring intense medical care along with all the other patients our hospitals regularly see every day. For those not familiar, Crisis Standards of Care is a framework that has been developed to provide hospitals and healthcare providers with guidance for scarce resource allocation if demand for healthcare resources exceeds the supply.

The surge in cases statewide coincided with children returning to school and the virus is spreading more quickly among children than any other time in the pandemic due to the highly contagious Delta variant and the absence of public health mitigation strategies (like masking and physical distancing) in many schools. While the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is available to most Idahoans, it is not yet available to children under 12 years of age, which leaves them more vulnerable to contracting the disease. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has announced plans to meet later this month to discuss vaccine safety and efficacy data for children ages 5-11.

Increasing COVID-19 cases has also caused several health districts throughout the state to fall behind in their case investigations and reporting their case numbers, which has skewed the data the State of Idaho is reporting. We want to assure our community that EIPH's case investigations are up-to-date, and the numbers reported on our dashboard (found at [www.EIPH.Idaho.gov](http://www.EIPH.Idaho.gov)) each day (Monday-Friday) are accurate. We must note that we only report cases of which we have positive test results, and we know that some people do not seek testing for COVID-19 when they are experiencing symptoms. Because of this, the numbers reported will be lower than the level of the virus that is actually circulating in the community.

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.

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Electronic test results are generally available within 48-72 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.

Right now, our continued plea is for everyone to do all you can to help slow the spread of COVID-19 to protect yourself, our children, our schools, our businesses, and our healthcare capacity.

This includes:

- Getting vaccinated with the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine. Call EIPH at 208-533-3223 to schedule a vaccination appointment, inquire about booster eligibility, or to ask questions.
- 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.

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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