

November 10, 2020
D.1 Covid-19 Update

To date, 10 million people have been infected with the Coronavirus in the United States. The surge is picking up. Data from John Hopkins shows the most recent 1 million infections happened faster than any previous million-just in the last ten days.

The positivity rate currently now in California is sitting at 3.7%, and increase from 2.5 % in less than a month. California Health and Human Services Secretary, Dr. Mark Ghaly shared that the private home gatherings are the most consistently mentioned by contact tracers as the major source of transmission. To address that Health Services has worked with our regional Health Officer partners across the Bay Area to issue recommendations on how to be safe as we enter this holiday season and as we celebrate this winter.

Contra Costa County's case rate as of November 12, 2020 was six cases per 100,000 with an adjusted rate of 4.8%, which puts us in the red tier category. We will hear more officially from the state today.

There have been a total of 20,166 cases. Currently there are 46 people with COVID-19 in hospitals locally in Contra Costa County, which is a 200% increase over the last four weeks. The County has performed over 503,837 tests with a rate of about now 4,000 per day.

Guidelines for gatherings this holiday season:

Keep it safe. Keep it small. Keep it short and keep it stable.

Outside is safer than inside. Small is better, limit gatherings to no more than three households. Limit the gatherings to no more than two hours. Stable is a reiteration of sort of small- the same three households, not multiple different households.

Participating in multiple gatherings with different households is strongly discouraged . If attending several gatherings over the holidays, keep it the same group of people. Maintain at least six feet of physical distance from people who are not in your household at all times, whether you are inside or outside. Whether you are sitting or standing, the more distance is safer. Wear face coverings at all times, including when you are talking to others.

You can remove your face coverings briefly to eat or drink as long as you are staying six feet away. But keep those face coverings on. Remain outside as much as possible. If you go inside, open the windows and doors to increase ventilation. And wash your

hands with soap and water often. If you don't have soap and water available, use hand sanitizer.

When you are serving shared food, use when you can disposable containers. Keep your face covering on while you are preparing and serving. If you are dropping off home cooked food or drinks or gifts, be sure to wear a mask and disinfect and wash your handing thoroughly.

Avoid singing, chanting and shouting. And if you can't avoid these activities, keep your face covering on and keep your volume low and keep at least six feet distance from others. The same recommendations are applying to travel.

Wear your face covering, maintain distance, wash or sanitize your hands often.

We have more information about how to say stay this holiday season at CCHHealth.org where you could find a whole bunch of recommendations from our health team.

The County held a testing event on Saturday in San Pablo. 673 people were tested in one day, and 339 flu vaccines were administered. 85% of the people who came were first-time testers. Ms Roth noted a few organizations that assisted: United Latino Voices, the Community Clinic Consortium, Life Long Medical, RISE, St. Vincent DePAUL, Catholic Charities as well as Health Services employees and volunteers.

Health Services approached the event as a pilot, and will be examining how to replicate this kind of success in the future for future events.

Dr. Farnitano noted there is exciting news about vaccine progress. We are still learning about what potential vaccine candidates are going to be like. There will be additional data that companies are collecting before they come to the Food and Drug Administration, the F.D.A., to request approval of those vaccines.

The county is not waiting for notification of approval of a vaccine. The infrastructure needed locally to help move quickly when a vaccine becomes available is being put into place now. Several months ago, Health Services created a vaccine branch as part of the Health Department COVID response and began laying the groundwork to distribute and administer a COVID vaccine to members of the community who want one. Health Services positioned the COVID testing sites and our vaccine sites for influenza vaccine, flu vaccine, to test out how we can best reach our community and dispense and distribute vaccine on a large scale.

Several months ago, when we saw that several of the leading candidate were going to require ultra cold storage for the vaccine, the Health Services Department purchased a specialized freezer that can maintain a temperature of 70 degrees to negative 70

degrees below zero, and hold 28,000 doses of vaccine. We acquired that before the supply chain for these freezers became extremely limited.

The leading candidate for a vaccine has to be stored at very cold temperatures until the last five days. The last five days before being given, it can be taken out of that cold storage and stored at refrigerator temperature, so Health Services has increased available refrigeration storage.

Prioritization of who will receive the vaccine is being reviewed at the Federal level. At the time of initial approval there won't be enough vaccine for everyone who wants a vaccine. But that additional supply will come over the next few months. The current framework focused on the initial doses of vaccine for healthcare workers who are treating COVID-19 patients and healthcare workers who are likely to be exposed to the disease and those working with our most vulnerable individuals like healthcare workers in nursing homes.

The next phase focuses at other individuals at increased risk of severe illness or death such as our senior citizens and essential workers and then moving out to the general population.

In addition to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) review at the federal level of the data that each company will submit as far as how effective and how safe these vaccines are, the state of California has appointed an additional scientific safety review workgroup that includes several Bay Area experts, scientists and health physicians who will look at the same data and review it to provide additional confidence that the vaccine, whenever they sign off on, is considered to be safe. It is an extra level of safety review that is being provided in addition to the federal safety review.

Therefore, enough vaccine for everyone who wants one is still going to be several months away. That is why it is really important to keep this current surge of cases as small and short-lived as possible.

Supervisor Gioia felt the event was very successful in San Pablo and showed the value of community partnerships. He expressed interest in the demographic breakdown, especially in regard to the Latinx community. Dr. Farnitano will ask the data team to look at tests done on that Saturday event and break them out specifically compared to the rest of our testing data.

Supervisor Mitchoff was interested to know if Saturday testing would be done again. Dr. Farnitano said this San Pablo event would be used as a model to repeat the event in

other areas of the County going forward. Health Services will return to the Board with more information on that on December 8, 2020.

Vice Chair Burgis expressed interest in tracking and tracing efforts. Dr. Farnitano said the over the summer, Health Services significantly built up the contact tracing and case investigation team, making modifications and improvements along the way.

One thing that learned over the summer is that having one set of staff that was doing the case investigation, reaching out to the person who tested positive, and another staff member reaching their contacts, needed to be combined. Many times the contacts were in the same household and a rapport had already been established with the case investigator.

Because cases decreased in the months of September and October, and additional staff had been hired, the County was able to place significant effort on each case for optimal success in reaching those exposed. The current success rate of contact is at 83%, with a goal of reaching 90%.

Right now, we are reaching about, looks like 83% of our cases we're able to reach -- our goal is to get to 90%.

There's is recognition here and nationwide that because of widespread community transmission, a lot of people can't really identify where they might have picked up COVID. That makes the case investigation and contact tracing more challenging.

And as more people are not staying home and they're out doing things, that means their potential contacts are just greater in number that they may have been exposed during their infectious period. It's often hard to really assess whether the advice to isolate and quarantine is truly being followed. Attempts are made to follow up with people after the initial contact and follow through them through their isolation period and make sure they are following the directions of the Health Department and they have all their questions answered.

There is a lot of stigma attached to a positive test or exposure. Many people are afraid to tell their work place or they're reluctant to stay at home because they are the bread-winner of the family and they have concerns about income loss. They may not have sick leave at their work.

And so, there's a lot of those kinds of concerns we work through.

There is a surge in hospital cases. At one point we were below 20 cases. Contra Costa is currently at 47, more than double. It has been a steady slow increase over several

weeks and it has been at multiple hospitals across the county. As there are surges across the nation, it's worrisome about the whole healthcare infrastructure.

Hospitals have built up their PPE reservoirs, their masks and their gowns and gloves, but other things like critical intensive care unit medications being used for people in ICUs on ventilators are becoming low in supply across the country. Hospitals are experiencing a shortage of staff. These things have not come to a local problem yet.

The county has not yet seen a notable number of flu cases yet. Influenza usually arrives in California in late November or December.

There is concern that throwing a lot of COVID hospitalizations on top of the usual winter hospitalizations will really stress our hospital this winter. The Bay Area doesn't have a lot of extra hospital capacity in a typical winter.

Dr. Farnitano encourages everyone to keep up with routine preventive healthcare actions, including Flu shots, mammograms and colonoscopies and other cancer screenings, vaccinations and regular checkups. The hospitals have taken extraordinary steps to make their facilities incredibly safe for patients to come to. All are encouraged to continue their healthcare through in person visits or telehealth appointments.

Regarding schools, the state guidelines say that if a county moves from the red tier into the purple tier, that schools that have already partially opened can continue their reopening plan.

So, many schools are planning to open with transitional kindergarten, kindergarten and first grade and gradually move to bringing back some of the older grades. So, moving from the orange tier to the red tier doesn't change anything for schools. If the county moves to the purple tier, school staff will be requested to test more often