

**11-17-2020**  
**D.1 Covid 19 Update**

Dr. Roth:

Contra Costa County has been returned to the most restrictive purple tier by the state. Also known as applying the emergency break in the Blueprint to a Safer Economy. Daily cases have increased by 70% nationwide since the beginning of November. 41 counties in California have been moved to purple.

Over 244,000 people have died from the virus, which is over -- and over 10% of all the deaths were in California.

One of the things that we know about COVID that when it starts spreading, it spreads really fast. Daily cases have doubled in California in the last ten days. In the state, more than a million people have tested positive and more than 18,000 people have died from the virus. Here in Contra Costa, our adjusted case rate as of yesterday was 9.2 cases per day per 100,000 people. That's double that it was when we were here last week. And so, in the past week, we have identified a thousand additional cases bringing our total to 21,458.

When we were here on August 16th, we had 21 patients in the hospital. November 16th, we had 48 patients in the hospital. That was yesterday. Today we have 63 patients in the hospital.

So, we're seeing a steep rise in cases as well as in hospitalizations in our county. And if we are doing the math, that is 15 overnight being hospitalized. So, what is the state's contact tracing telling us about why this is happening? We know that the state's tracing data is telling us that the most commonplace people are contracting this virus is in congregate living facilities. So, senior care facilities and other congregate settings.

The second reason is unknown. Simply put it, people don't know where they are getting the virus. It is moving. It is so common now in our communities that people aren't really sure where they got it. The third most common identified cause now from the tracing is restaurants. And the fourth is family gatherings.

Thanksgiving is next week. We know that this can be a really hard time of year for many and even without COVID. So, on top of that, now we are really thinking a lot about the behavioral health impacts of the isolation, the stress of the pandemic.

Many of us may not be able to go see our loved ones and connect with our support systems in the way we have in the -- way we have in the past. We will be posting several resources on our website and social media this week about different resources that we have available to people. And we strongly encourage anyone who needs support to reach out.

Traditionally, this is a time to gather with our family and friends and consider asking -- what we're asking now is if you gather, keep it safe, keep it short and keep it stable. And what we mean by

---

that is, have it outside, if you can. Hold it at three households or less with a maximum of 25 people. Keep it short. So, two hours or less.

And I will add one more thing. If you plan to gather as a family, consider asking everyone to get tested 3-5 days before the event.

Though that should not be seen as protection, you should still wear face coverings.

It is an added layer of protection you will have when you come together. That is one piece. The other thing is face coverings. We can't stress this enough that face covering -- wearing face coverings at all times, especially when you are talking to others is really key. You can remove the coverings briefly to eat or drink, as long as you stay at least six feet away from everyone outside of your household.

And how much does it really matter to wear face coverings? If 80% of the population wore masks, it would do more to reduce the spread of COVID than a very strict lockdown. And so, that's why you keep hearing us talking about wearing a face covering. Masking, masking. Cover your face. And even among family members, It's the best way to protect yourself and those you love.

We hope that people can use the information on our website at [CChealth.org](http://CChealth.org) to find ways to celebrate safely. And I won't have the opportunity to come back to the board before the Thanksgiving holiday.

So, I wanted to conclude my remarks today with a message of gratitude.

To the Board of Supervisors, I want to thank you for your leadership during this extremely trying year and trying circumstances.

To the essential workers and front line workers across our community, I want to thank you for giving care and comfort, food and shelter and assistance in those in need.

For meeting anxiety and fear with compassion and understanding, for providing sustainability in an ever-changing environment. And for always standing up for what you believe.

To the members of our community, I want to thank you for your sacrifice, your understanding, your patience and your diligence in following the powerful Public Health guidelines that are being put out by our Health Officers as well as around the country. And those actions are protecting our community, protecting our health workers, protecting our front line and protecting those -- you and those you love.

As we pause this week to reflect and give thanks, I want to give special thanks for those who won't be able to celebrate Thanksgiving this year. Their commitment will find them serving others. Your deeds, big and small, do not go unnoticed.

To each and under every one of you, your deeds big and small do not go unnoticed.

Making Contra Costa Health Service and all of our partners so vital. We know you have stepped up and continue to step up with courage and compassion. We see you, we hear you and we are truly grateful for you.

---

Dr. Farnitano:

As Director Roth mentioned, our test positivity rates have almost doubled from a low of 1.9% to now 3.6%. Last week we were alarmed by a steep rise of cases test positivity and especially hospitalizations. Several Bay Area counties including Contra Costa County took action to close indoor dining and institute several other purple tier restrictions.

The state then took the action yesterday to implement the full purple tier restrictions to contra costa county, as well as most counties throughout state. These additional changes will go into effect today, this includes worship services, now must be held outdoors only.

Schools that haven't already been in the process of reopening, now must not reopen, must continue distance learning for education;

Movie theaters may only operate outdoor;

Social gatherings that were already limited to three households, no more than 25 people, must be held outdoors and not -- are not permitted indoors.

These steps are all really essential to help control this wave that is just getting started here in our county and throughout the state. We are getting a lot of questions about travel as we are approaching the holidays. The state has issued new travel guidance that recommends that all Californians stay home and avoid nonessential travel to other parts of the state, other states or other countries. And then, if you do travel out of state, the state recommends a 14-day period of quarantine for when you return. A lot of the same recommendations that we have for daily living apply and are even more essential when you travel. That includes wearing a face covering, maintaining your social distance from others, that you don't live with, and wash and sanitize your hands often. All of these actions are critical if you're going to weather the Covid wave that we're seeing already begin.

At the current rate of rise, we will actually exceed our summer peak of Covid daily cases by Thanksgiving Day. That's next week. We've already climbed well past the halfway point between our low of hospital cases this fall and our summer peak of hospital cases of about 105 patients in the hospital.

I'm thinking a lot this week about our nurses, and our other health care providers who are tired, they're exhausted, after dealing with this pandemic for months. And now they're looking at this incoming wave with lots of worry and anxiety.

Now, to bring up a more hopeful topic, there's a lot of encouraging news about Covid vaccines we've seen in the past couple of weeks. We're still continuing to learn about how safe and effective these vaccine candidates are.

---

Yesterday, there was news about a vaccine made by the Moderna company that was over 90% effective in preventing Covid infection. It also appeared very effective in preventing severe Covid disease. Both this vaccine and the Pfizer vaccine that we had news reports about last week may have had enough effectiveness data and safety data within the next few weeks that they may be submitting their data to the fda for review and for consideration of an emergency use authorization. In the meantime, we've been working tirelessly to put together the infrastructure we need to move quickly when a vaccine or vaccines are approved for use.

Our vaccine branch of our health department is working very closely with our state partners. We have been testing out and practicing different ways to bring flu vaccine to the community so that we can just these same pathways for a Covid vaccine or vaccines when it's ready. We've purchased a specialized freezer that would maintain a degree of 70° below zero. The Moderna vaccine also needs to be initially stored at these low temperatures, but can be stored refrigerator temperatures for the final 30 days before being administered. So this gives us more flexibility with this vaccine.

We have both fixed and mobile refrigerator capacity on hand for an additional 83,000 doses of vaccine so that the centers for disease control and the department of public health at the state of California continue to develop a phased approach to dispensing new Covid vaccines. The first phase is a very tight focus on health care workers treating Covid-19 patients and health care workers are likely to be exposed to the disease. Phase 1b includes individuals in danger of disease or death, and includes rolling out the vaccine to the general population.

So we're going to be working with a lot of communities partners including large health systems, pharmacies, community health centers and others to help bring the vaccine to the community as fast as we possibly can. It will be an all hands on deck broach.

Finally i just want to conclude by saying we all need at this point giving what we're facing to hunker down, stay at home, wear our masks and avoid gatherings as much as we can in the face of these had rapidly rising Covid rates and hospitalizations that we can safely get through this dark Covid winter and get us to a glorious vaccine spring.

---