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Covid 19 Update Report

Anna Roth, Health Services Director

A major milestone in the pandemic has been met. Health Services had set a goal of delivering one million vaccines by July 4th, then revised that to Memorial Day. This goal was met over the weekend. Contra Costa created a system that is delivering more than 90,000 doses of the vaccine per week.

The positive trend of lessening cases that allowed the County to move into the Orange Tier has now flattened. In order to move to the yellow tier, the occurrence of new cases of infection needs to be below two per 100,000 residents. The current rate is 4.8. Contra Costa is expected to remain in the orange tier until at least June 15, 2021 when the Blueprint for A Safe Economy is updated or discontinued by the Governor.

The number of people dying from Covid-19 in Contra Costa is on a steady decline. Health Services is watching a new trend with concern. Younger people are getting infected and being hospitalized. The average age of those who die from the virus has changed from 73 years old in March to 64 years old in April.

The most powerful defense against the virus is vaccination. Health Services wants to make it easy as possible for those people who haven't yet gotten a vaccine. There are 9,000 appointments available in the next seven days. There is no backlog. You can go online to [cc health.org](https://cc.health.org) and book directly. You don't have to wait for a ticket or wonder if you are eligible. Everyone 16 or over is eligible.

Walk-in sites are available, no appointment necessary. To find out exactly the closest vaccination site to you or where those walk-in sites are, visit [cc health.org](https://cc.health.org) or call (833)829-2626.

Between April 15th and the 26th, the County's mobile teams provided 7,000 vaccines in the hardest hit communities between Brentwood and Richmond. Health Services is grateful to our community partners for making this possible including United Latino Voices, One Accord, and the churches and faith leaders that have stepped forward to make this possible, in addition to efforts by the firefighters. The community commitment to get the vaccines out has been truly awe inspiring.

Vaccines work better when everyone is vaccinated - the concept of community immunity or herd immunity. Between the ages of 16-50, there are 225,000 people in Contra Costa County who have yet to be vaccinated.

Ms. Roth encourages residents to talk to each other about their vaccine questions. [CChealth.org](https://cc.health.org) website has a page frequently asked questions. Health Services has been tracking questions about the vaccines. If you go to the frequently asked question page, you can learn the common answer to the questions many, many people have been having.

We can't emphasize enough that we really want you to get your vaccine today, right? We have tried to make it easy as possible. We have moved vaccine sites into neighborhoods across the community. A vaccine call line is available. Please make your appointment to get your vaccine.

Dr. Farnitano, Public Health Officer

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine was briefly paused in the United States due to concerns about a rare side effect of blood clots. The CDC (Center for Disease Control) as well as the western state scientific panel have reviewed the evidence carefully, and they have concluded the risk is so small, and it is far outweighed by the tremendous benefit in the vaccine preventing people from getting seriously ill from covid-19 infection. There have been in total about 15 cases of this reaction nationwide out of nearly 8,000,000 doses administered of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. That's an overall risk of two out of 1,000,000 people. Most of the cases were women under 50. Even in that age group of women, the risk is estimated to be seven in a million. A very rare side effect.

Contra Costa County has Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines. People who would prefer the one-dose Johnson & Johnson will be able to choose that one. At County sites, a person can choose a one-dose or two-dose vaccine. The mobile teams will be scheduling specific days on which they have the one or two dose version.

It is expected that approval will be granted for the vaccination of teens 12-15 within a few weeks.

Health Services has been working closely with our partner school districts to plan for some vaccine events, community vaccine events at local middle schools and high schools for those students and families and other members of the community to come to their local school to be vaccinated.

We expect there to be some break-through cases with the vaccines, those cases in which a vaccinated person still contracts the virus. The vaccines are not 100% effective in preventing covid, but they are 100% effective in preventing severe illness or death. Health Services has tracked 128 cases of breakthrough cases in the county reported over the last three months. Some were symptomatic, many were a-symptomatic. That works out to one or two cases per day of someone fully vaccinated from covid testing positive compared to over 100 cases a day we have been seeing among the unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.

There were identified about four hospitalized cases, people hospitalized with covid fully vaccinated in the past four months. That is in comparison to have had several hundred cases of hospitalized cases during that timeframe of unvaccinated persons. The vaccines are incredibly effective, very powerful vaccines. While not perfect, they dramatically prevent cases and more so hospitalizations and deaths from covid.

Health Services is tracking the new variant strains of covid, actually having begun the whole gene sequencing in the County's own public health lab. The county purchased our own machine and sequenced 82 specimens with plans to increase within our own lab. In addition to that, we continue to send specimens to an outside lab for general surveillance. 60 to 90 specimens a week.

The goal is to do random sampling, as well as targeted surveillance with people hospitalized or have other concerns about possibly having a variant. The most common variant seen is this west coast variant. That's the one predominant throughout California. We are also seeing increasing numbers of the B.1.1.7 -- otherwise known as the U.K. variant. Contra Costa has identified 32 cases of that one. That's concerning because it seems to spread more easily and cause more severe disease. We think we are going to continue to see an increase with sequencing.

Of note, throughout California, in March, about 20% of the sequences were the U.K. variant and now increased to 40% throughout California and April are the U.K. variant. It was late to arrive in California compared to other places in the east coast and midwest, but we are seeing more of the u.k. variant which makes it even more important for people to get vaccinated because the covid that's in the community is more easy to spread and more lethal, more severe.

The vaccine still works against the variant. So far Contra Costa has seen only one case of the P.1 Brazil variant and no cases of the B.1.351 known as the South Africa variant.

There was concern about a fourth wave following the Easter and Passover holidays and spring break travel, and fortunately, there has not been an increased rate of cases. That is mainly because we have gotten the vaccines out so quickly. California has opened up slower than other parts of the country which has seen a spring fourth wave.

Contra Costa is currently in the Orange tier. In actuality, it's a tale of two counties. Contra Costa is really a purple county and yellow county at the same time. We have 430,000 of our residents fully vaccinated. We have 200,000 people partially vaccinated and 300,000 adults with yet to begin the adult process. That's not counting the 200,000 children yet

not eligible, underage 16, not eligible to be vaccinated. If you look at the case rates in our unvaccinated adults where we are seeing most of the case, that rate is three to four times the overall case rate in the county.

At the current level of 20 positive cases a day, not just five or six cases per day, overall, Contra Costa would be in the purple tier. The number of unvaccinated is shrinking, the case rate over all is staying level. The case rate among the unvaccinated is increasing.

For those fully vaccinated, yellow county conditions apply, where it's safe to do a lot of activities, indoor dining, getting together with friends, but those who are unvaccinated, purple conditions apply, where the activities are dangerous, and people are at high risk of getting covid and getting sick.

Everyone that hasn't started the process of getting vaccinated should schedule an appointment.