

Covid-19 Update Report

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Erika Jenssen, CCHS Deputy Health Director

As the public has noted, we have continued to see improvement in Covid-19 rates this week. We are so pleased and thank our community that nearly 82% of county residents ages 12 and older are fully vaccinated and 86.8% are partially vaccinated. Which is incredible so thank you all for making that happen.

Over the past two weeks, case rates have dropped 35% and hospitalizations decreased by 27%. Our seven-day average of new cases was 146.4 on September 26th, the last day we have complete data, compared to 211 on September 12th. A significant drop during those two weeks in September. And as of yesterday (October 4, 2021) 81 people were hospitalized. Just one month ago on September 4th, 183 people were hospitalized for Covid-19 in the county.

We are not out of the woods there yet. While transmission is down in our community and infections are down we are still substantially above the levels considered safe by the State of California when it lifted its health order on June 15. Our seven-day rolling average of new Covid cases was 146 on September 26th, compared to 45.3 on June 15th. We have certainly some Covid-19 in our community particularly the delta variant. And so we are cautious, happy about these numbers but also cautious.

Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) continues to encourage everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated. Our local data show again and again getting vaccinated protects our community. After you are vaccinated you are much less likely to become infected, hospitalized or to die because of Covid.

Since December 15th, 2020 95% of Covid-19 related deaths were among people who were unvaccinated or partially vaccinated. Unvaccinated people in Contra Costa are more than eight times more likely to be hospitalized and nearly four times as likely to contract Covid-19 than vaccinated people.

There is some good news. The Pfizer vaccine is currently available to children ages 12 to 15 under an emergency use authorization. Pfizer began the authorization process with the FDA last week by submitting data from younger age groups from their clinical trials. The FDA has announced that the FDA panel is meeting on October 26th to consider making the vaccine available ages 5 to 11, under an emergency youth authorization. We expect that younger children ages five to 11 years old will be able to receive the vaccine somewhere around November 1st depending on all of the various approvals.

We are incredibly pleased and hopeful about this because it will mean that kids in that age group 5 to 11 could have received our first dose by Thanksgiving and be fully vaccinated in time for the winter holidays. That is great news for families across the nation and certainly in our county and we know that people have been really thinking about how to celebrate the holidays this year.

On Friday (October 1, 2021) Governor Newsom announced a vaccine mandate for students to begin in 2022. California will begin requiring eligible students to get vaccinated against Covid-19 after vaccines are fully authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

We don't expect full approval from the FDA for ages 5 to 11 this year, obviously, because they still have to do the emergency use. So the younger kids likely won't be subject to this vaccine mandate until July 2022, and we're waiting to see about the older kids. We don't know exactly when this vaccine mandate, for schoolchildren, will take effect but likely not until mid 2022.

The West Contra Costa School District passed its own vaccine mandate for eligible students and under that mandate West Contra Costa School District students 12 and over are required to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 with proof of their first shot by November 15th and their second shot by December 15th.

Dr. Chris Farnitano, Public Health Officer, has written a letter in support of this and expresses his full support for other school districts in Contra Costa enacting mandates for student vaccination.

The CDC has issued a health advisory strongly recommending that pregnant women get Covid-19 vaccine. It is an urgent health advisory for people who are pregnant, recently pregnant including those who are lactating, those who are trying to become pregnant now or may become pregnant in the future to prevent serious illness deaths and adverse pregnancy outcomes.

We know that vaccination rates are much lower among pregnant people than among the general population. According to CDC data only 31% of people who are pregnant have been vaccinated and these vaccination rates are markedly very different across race and ethnicity. Vaccination coverage highest among Asian American people who are pregnant, lower among latin pregnant people and the lowest among African American pregnant people.

At Contra Costa Regional Medical Center, between June 1st and September 9th, of the 527 women admitted there to deliver their babies, only 29% were fully vaccinated on or before delivery. After delivery, this increased to 51% fully vaccinated and 59% partially vaccinated. We do urge our hospitals who have women coming in to deliver babies to check vaccination records and to offer the vaccine to women postpartum as well as family members who are coming to visit. There have been 125,000 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in pregnant people, including more than 22,000 hospitalized and 161 deaths in the United States. Pregnant women are at a higher risk of hospitalization and death related to Covid-19 vaccine.

So we are really interested in increasing vaccination and offering it at every opportunity that we can. We are aware that misinformation of Covid vaccine exists. Misinformation about the risk of the Covid-19 and we are really interested in countering that misinformation and giving scientific based facts.

Gilbert Salinas, Chief Equity Officer

There has been a 2.7% increase in new vaccinations in September and first few days of October. Antioch has seen a 4.2% increase in September compared to 2.7 for the entire county. Our mobile vaccine teams continue to bring vaccines the hardest hit communities seven days a week. Medical reserve corps has been conducting weekly vaccination clinics. This community was identified as having some of the lowest vaccination rates and highest poverty rates throughout the county. We chose to embed ourselves into this community and show up every Thursday. Meeting people where they already gather. As was hoped the word spread about our pop up vaccine clinic and the number of people getting vaccinated steadily grew with a peak in August. Since July 11th, and we've administered over 363 doses of Covid-19 vaccine.

This outreach effort is really just an example, one example of how if you embed yourself into a community, the community will then build trust, you build trust, you establish relationships, and for example in this census tract, the vaccination rate has increased to 60.7% to the residents 12 plus. When we first began Sycamore Project in the beginning of July only 38.8% of the population was vaccinated. Since June the gap has narrowed in the Sycamore tract by 11%.

Since we began the Thursday night vaccine clinics the Cielo Market location has become an established part of the community and has seen the largest number of referrals. The weekday clinic at Cielo Market is just one example of how increased awareness among low income and other marginalized communities, building a mobile vaccination model, positioning vaccination teams at workplaces marketplaces and other high traffic community

settings brings great results. We have seen excellent results from this work through partnerships with local religious leaders, prominent community leaders and local businesses.

Dr. Ori Tsvieli, Deputy Public Health Officer

Currently CCHS is offering booster shot appointments for people who are eligible and who have completed two doses of the Pfizer vaccine series at least six months ago. We are expecting the FDA to meet on October 14th or 15th to make decisions about boosters for people who have received Moderna or Johnson & Johnson, but for now the only ones who are eligible and are accepting for boosters are people who got two doses of the Pfizer vaccines.

Two groups, those who are recommended who should get the booster and those who may consider. Everyone over the age of 65 or that lives in a long term care setting should get the booster shot. Everyone who is over 50 and have underlying medical health conditions that put them at higher risk for serious illness if they're infected and people who are 50 and older who are at increased risk of severe Covid due to social inequities including those from communities of color.

California Department of Public Health (CDPH) also says that people age 18 through 49 who have underlying medical conditions and those aged 18 through 64 who are at increased risk of exposure to Covid-19 due to their occupation or institutional or living in an institutional setting should get a booster shot.

At this time, you must schedule appointments for booster shots through Contra Costa Health Services. We are not accepting walk ins without an appointment - but we have many appointments available. Go to myturn.ca.gov you for access to our sites, it can get access to pharmacy, Kaiser, John Muir and community clinic sites. There is no vaccine scarcity and appointments are plentiful. There are many choices of locations.

Boosters are currently not available for people who had J & J or Moderna vaccines although we are expecting to hear more on that in the middle of the month. People who are immunocompromised who got Moderna for the first two doses may receive a third dose of Moderna vaccine.

To save lives and prevent our hospitals from being overwhelmed and to keep businesses and schools open, Contra Costa Health Services issued an order which went into effect last month which required proof of negative Covid test or vaccination. These businesses have increased risk of spread because it is where people remove their face covering to eat or drink or they breathe heavily because of physical exertion. Workers of these businesses must provide proof of these vaccinations or negative testing. Vaccine is our number 1 tool to protect against serious illness or hospitalization or death from Covid-19. We encourage every resident over the age of 12 to get a safe and effective vaccine today.

Contra Costa is working in coordination with other counties in the region who have an indoor masking order to establish a criteria for these counties to ease some of these restrictions. We expect to announce something with details by the end of this week.

The criteria will include a combination of the rates of the local community vaccination rates, rates of Covid in the community and the number of people in the hospitals in the community.

Especially early in the pandemic but even more recently than that, some people have been leery of going in the clinics and getting the preventive checkups. That makes a huge difference, getting the mammogram, colon screening, pap smear, making sure your blood pressure is under control, cholesterol is under control. Those are very important things and we don't want to neglect that still the number 1 killer in our community is heart disease, cardiovascular disease, and there are things we can do for all those things. If you haven't been for your checkup please come in. This is a good time to do that.

All of the health care facilities are really strict, they have been wearing masks, we have not seen transmission in the health care facilities, you can be safe to go there and get your medical needs met.

CCHS is recommending flu shots and they are available at many health care providers and pharmacies. A person can get the Covid-19 vaccine and the flu vaccine at the same time. The CDC has weighed into it and there is good data showing it is safe so we do recommend the flu shot.

The mobile teams are still available for homebound individuals and will provide the booster vaccine for those that are eligible. They are not at this time offering the flu vaccine, only the Covid-19 shots. If someone comes into one of the fixed sites and there is enough of a flu vaccine supply, which there is right now, then we will offer people a flu vaccine along with a Covid vaccine.

It should be noted that I really do want to emphasize that pregnant women are at increased risk from hospitalization from Covid-19, but also from the flu and are encouraged to the flu vaccine.