



Department of Public Health  
www.fcdph.org

# Public Health Notice

## COVID-19

### Surge Continues to Worsen

#### August 20, 2021

Fresno County and other counties throughout the state of California are currently experiencing the fastest increase in COVID-19 cases since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. From June 15 to August 15, 2021 there has been a steep rise in case incidence, from 2 cases per 100,000 people to over 30 new cases per 100,000 people per day, over a 2-month period.

A more contagious strain of COVID-19, called the Delta variant, is currently the most common variant causing new infections in California and Fresno County. Recent data suggest that COVID-19 viral load is roughly 1,000 times higher in people infected with the Delta variant than those infected with the original coronavirus strain. Masking in indoor settings can help reduce the spread of this highly contagious strain between people.

Vaccines, including Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson products, continue to be highly effective in reducing the severity of COVID-19 infection and preventing hospitalization and death. Vaccinations are also effective in reducing the spread of the virus. Almost all current COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths are among unvaccinated persons. "Please continue to follow all COVID-19 precautions and continue to mask and vaccinate. Only by working together will we be able to end this surge and prevent more hospitalizations and deaths," says Dr. Rais Vohra, Interim Health Officer.

Local hospitals are increasingly strained by the increase in COVID-19 cases, as well as non-COVID illnesses being seen at this time. "Emergency rooms and hospitals are over capacity and ambulance transportation is also impacted due to wait times to turn patients over to physicians in emergency rooms," says Dan Lynch, EMS Director. "This affects all health care delivery, not just COVID-19 patient care."

### Cases in Youth

The FCDPH Youth COVID-19 Dashboard is live and can be accessed at [https://datastudio.google.com/u/0/reporting/18ebaf6e-8225-48f1-af93-2f3e02b5c653/page/p\\_c8sfrls3lc](https://datastudio.google.com/u/0/reporting/18ebaf6e-8225-48f1-af93-2f3e02b5c653/page/p_c8sfrls3lc)

In the last 14 days, the Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH) has confirmed hundreds of COVID-19 cases in children under 19 years of age. Since K-12 school reopening, there have been confirmed cases linked to students and staff. There are currently 122 schools with at least 1 known reported case, 16 identified outbreaks (defined as 2 cases in one class or 3+ cases in a school), and total of 156 reported cases involving school settings.

Multiple athletic teams and extracurricular activities have also been affected and the FCDPH continues to advise schools and athletic teams on best practices to prevent infections in their activities. A small number of classrooms have been asked to quarantine, they will be able to return after a period of observation and testing as per standard procedures. Parents and students should be assured that Fresno County superintendents are doing their best to protect everyone. The FCDPH continues to meet weekly with all superintendents.

The FCDPH is asking all parents to protect their children who are not eligible for vaccination by getting the vaccine themselves if they have not yet done so. All children and adults should stay home from

school or work if sick and experiencing symptoms or if they are asked to isolate. In some cases, children, school staff and parents may also need to quarantine at home if they have close, unmasked contact with someone who has COVID. Close communication with school health officials and public health can help families determine the best course of action depending on the specific exposure that occurs.

## **Workplace Outbreaks and Congregate Settings**

Adults are also at higher risk, and occupational outbreaks are accelerating, due to the spread of the Delta strain of COVID-19. Tragically, this current surge is resulting in younger adult patients becoming hospitalized than prior surges, and these patients are often contracting the virus while working to support their families. Indoor workplaces such as warehouses, and retail establishments of all types, are at especially great risk due to the contagious nature of the Delta variant.

Businesses can protect both employees and customers by mandating COVID-19 vaccines among staff and asking for vaccine verification from everyone who is on the premises. Additionally, testing of at-risk or symptomatic workers and granting time away from work to allow for testing and recovery due to COVID-19 illness, or to get vaccinations, are best practices that employers are expected to implement.

As a reminder, the Emergency Temporary Standards established by Cal/OSHA require most Fresno County employers to report COVID-19 outbreaks in the workplace to the FCDPH within 48 hours. Outbreaks can be reported by businesses at [www.fdcph.org/covid19business](http://www.fdcph.org/covid19business).

Outbreaks are defined as:

- Outbreak - 3 or more cases in a workplace within a 14-day period
- Major outbreaks - 20 or more cases within a 30-day period

There are also 41 congregate setting facilities (such as skilled nursing facilities, jails, prisons, or shelters) experiencing outbreaks. All congregate setting facilities are encouraged to review and update their mandatory COVID-19 safety protocols, which should include masking, vaccination requirement or verification, and testing of nonvaccinated or symptomatic individuals.

## **Protect Yourself and Your Family**

“The bottom line is, this surge already is or will soon be affecting almost every neighborhood, school district and occupation in our county, making the next few weeks a very challenging time for the general community and our already impacted health care system. Please be careful and protect yourself and your family and coworkers by getting vaccinated, getting tested when symptomatic, and staying home from work or school when you feel ill,” says Vohra.

If individuals work or reside in congregate settings, they are at higher risk of COVID-19 and should get vaccinated immediately. Vaccine information, registration, and events are available at [www.fcdph.org/covid19vax](http://www.fcdph.org/covid19vax).

If individuals are exposed or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please get tested right away. A list of a testing sites can be found at [www.fcdph.org/covid19testing](http://www.fcdph.org/covid19testing). Over the counter rapid tests for home use are now available at local drug stores and online retail outlets, and residents are advised to choose only those products which have been approved by the FDA for home use.