



Quad Cities COVID-19 Coalition FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 28, 2021

Recording of today's call

A video recording can be found at <https://www.scottcountyiowa.com/health/covid19/news>

Explaining updated CDC mask guidance

Remarks from Amy Thoreson, director of the Scott County Health Department

The CDC released yesterday that the Delta variant is now found to be the dominant variant spreading in the United States being found in 8 out of every 10 samples that are being studied. Public health researchers are finding that the Delta variant is uniquely different than earlier strains and is much more contagious and causing more severe illness in those effected. Additionally, some vaccinated people can get Delta in a breakthrough infection and could be contagious. This virus and its spread are especially concerning for two groups:

- Those who cannot be vaccinated: both children younger than age 12 and those individuals with medical conditions that do not allow them to be vaccinated
- And individuals who are not able to get full protection even though they are fully vaccinated (those who are immune compromised or have other medical conditions)

As a result, the CDC has made the following updates to its mask guidance:

- In areas with substantial and high transmission, CDC recommends that everyone (including fully vaccinated individuals) wear a mask in public indoor settings to help prevent spread of Delta and protect others.
- CDC recommends that community leaders encourage vaccination and masking to prevent further outbreaks in areas of substantial and high transmission.
- CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place.

Here is what this update in guidance means for our area:

The CDC has four levels of community transmission; from low to high, they include: Low, Moderate, Substantial, and High. Both Scott and Rock Island counties are currently at the Moderate Transmission level, but case counts are rising quickly. The week-over-week increase in Scott County was 55%, and it was 125% in Rock Island County. Right now, this means the mask guidance for our community as a whole has not changed, but it could quickly if we don't stem the rapid increases in infections on both sides of the river.

For the month of June, 88 positive cases were reported for Scott County. For the month of July (through yesterday), 211 positive cases have been reported. Of those 211, more than 180 cases have been reported since July 13. While these numbers aren't what we have seen in the past, they are concerning for the public health community and for our healthcare community.

Illinois will follow CDC guidance

Remarks from Nita Ludwig, administrator of the Rock Island County Health Department

In Rock Island County, 47 positive cases were reported in June. So far in July, through yesterday, 127 cases have been added, with 94 coming since July 15. We will report today's cases this afternoon. Most troubling is the rapid increase in hospitalizations. Today, nine people are hospitalized in Rock Island County with COVID-19. More than 75% of residents 65 and older have been fully vaccinated, so the people getting seriously ill now are younger and have been eligible for vaccination since March. We have seen a version of this story numerous times over the last 16 months. Rising cases now has meant rising deaths a few weeks later because COVID-19 patients suffer greatly before the virus eventually kills them. Almost every person getting sick now could have been vaccinated to prevent serious illness.

The school year is upon us. Rock Island-Milan and United Township/East Moline schools start next week. Other districts on both sides of the river start later this month, but make no mistake: With more indoor activities, the virus will spread quickly. Remember that no one younger than 12 years old is eligible for vaccination under the federal government's Emergency Use Authorization. Those of us who are eligible to be vaccinated must help protect the ones who can't yet get the shot.

The start of school also is concerning because we are seeing this kind of spread at our current vaccination levels of 52% in the 12+ population, and our vaccination levels have pretty much stalled. Low vaccination levels allow the coronavirus to continue circulating, continue mutating, and continue to potentially create stronger variants. The biggest concern is that a variant will emerge that evades our vaccines. Because higher vaccination levels reduce spread of the virus, there is less chance for the virus to spread and mutate. We have to vaccinate our way out of this.

As a result, we recommend the following actions for our community:

1. Get vaccinated if you are eligible and able to. Visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find your shot.
2. Get tested if you believe you may have symptoms of COVID-19. Testing is available at many Quad-City pharmacies and healthcare providers.
3. If you are a high-risk individual or are around high-risk individuals, you should consider the protection that wearing a mask can provide you.

4. Be safe when you are out and about — you likely don't know the vaccination status of individuals you are around in the community and your activities out and about likely have different risk levels.

Throughout this pandemic, we in the Quad Cities have been keenly aware of the differences between Illinois and Iowa. Yesterday, Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker said Illinois will follow CDC guidelines and masking will return to counties with substantial and high transmission. Most of the bottom two-thirds of Illinois has substantial or high transmission rates, with pockets, including Henry, Bureau and Stark counties near us, in the upper third of the state.

We will continue to keep you informed of COVID-19 spread and recommendations as we see changes. We want you and your family to be informed and able to make the best decisions possible to protect yourself. The county-level data also is available on the CDC website: [covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker](https://www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker). We also will post this link on our social media sites.

More information

- www.TogetherQC.com
- coronavirus.iowa.gov
- <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19>
- <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/vaccinedata?county=Rock%20Island>
- <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/regionmetrics?regionID=2>

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