

Custer County Department of Public Health and Environment

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY: COVID-19 SURGE, HOSPITALIZATIONS AND DEATHS

NOVEMBER 05, 2021

Custer County has reached the level of severe transmission rates of COVID-19 based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Framework. The highly transmissible Delta variant of the COVID19 virus is the predominant strain driving very high case rates, hospitalizations, and death in Custer County. The Custer County Department of Public Health and Environment (CCDPHE) advises all residents and visitors that COVID-19 is widely dispersed across the county and all people regardless of age are at risk of contracting the virus when participating in indoor activities with mixed households who are unvaccinated or have mixed or unknown vaccination status against COVID-19.

I. Definition: For the purposes of this Advisory, "Public Indoor Space" means any enclosed indoor area that is publicly or privately owned, managed, or operated to which individuals have access by right or by invitation, expressed or implied, and is accessible to the public, serves as a place of employment, or is an entity providing services. Public Indoor Space does not mean a person's residence, including a room in a motel or hotel or a residential room for students at an educational facility.

II. Findings:

- Colorado currently has the 5th highest level of disease transmission in the country.
- The 7-day percent positivity in Custer County on November 5, 2021 is approximately 29 (cases in the past 7 days).
- There are 97 patients hospitalized at local hospitals on November 5, 2021. All three county's local hospitals who accept our residents report limited capacity and ICU capacity to respond to other health emergencies. Cosmetic procedures have been suspended due to a recent state Public Health Order and other elective procedures are currently limited due to capacity restraints. In-bound transfers from Custer County has been stopped. High rates of hospitalizations across the state may invoke the Crisis Standards of Care for local hospitals. (Crisis Standards of Care are guidelines used during a public health emergency or disaster when there are inadequate healthcare resources to provide the usual standard of care to people in need.)
- Current case rates and hospitalizations are at the highest rate since January 2021.
- Approximately 51% of Custer County's eligible residents (73% of those 65 and older) are fully vaccinated. Hospitalizations and deaths are largely occurring in those who are unvaccinated. However, it is important to note that approximately 20% of cases are "breakthrough" cases where the person who becomes ill was previously fully vaccinated or has previously been infected with the COVID virus. Generally, those "breakthrough" cases

are related to chronic medical conditions, waning immunity, or to the large amount of circulating virus (infected individuals) in our community.

- Vaccines are now available for those 12 and older. On November 2, 2021, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) also approved an emergency use authorization for vaccines for those ages 5-11.
- *Booster doses have been approved for those 18 and older with other underlying health conditions that put them at high-risk for COVID-19 as well as those who through their occupation or living arrangements may be placed at higher risk of infections. Consult your health provider if you have questions about which vaccine booster you should receive.*
- A level of immunity due to a previous infection does exist for those who were previously ill with the virus. However, infection-induced immunity does wane over time, like vaccine-induced immunity. The specific time frame for both infection-related immunity or vaccine-induced immunity is unknown, and the level of immunity is not highly predictable. The current science suggests immunity from a previous infection may last for about three months and possibly longer for some individuals. This immunity is less if the original infection was caused by a previous variant rather than the current Delta variant. Evidence also suggests immunity from the vaccine may begin to lessen by six months and recommends booster doses.
- Emerging evidence also suggests that those who are already fully vaccinated or who have a mild infection may continue to transmit the virus to others even if they themselves do not become symptomatic.
- COVID-19 most readily transmits via respiratory droplets spread through conversation, exertion, coughing, sneezing, and hands-to-face contact.

III. LAYERED MITIGATION

CCDPHE advises that layered mitigation strategies (i.e multiple overlapping layers of protection) are the best strategy for minimizing transmission and protecting yourself from the virus). To best accomplish layered mitigation, CCDPHE advises the following:

- *Get fully vaccinated*- Three vaccines are currently available in the United States. All have demonstrated high levels of efficacy and safety. For most people, side effects are limited and far less severe than the effects caused by the virus itself. Boosters are also now available for those who are 18 and over and were fully vaccinated at least six months ago with Pfizer or Moderna vaccine and at least two months ago with the Johnson and Johnson/ Janssen vaccine. Vaccines and boosters are free, and a doctor or healthcare provider referral is not required. If you have medical concerns about getting the vaccine, please consult with your primary care healthcare provider.
- *Social distance*- Maintain at least six feet between you and the other non-family members around you.
- *Wear a mask*- Masks help reduce the transmission of the virus and help protect the person wearing the mask when worn appropriately (covering the nose and mouth).
- *Stay away from large crowds* or gatherings if you are unvaccinated

- Practice good hand hygiene and sneezing/coughing etiquette- Cough and sneeze into your sleeve, wash your hands regularly, try not touch to your face.
- *Monitor health symptoms daily.* COVID-19 affects people differently. Common symptoms include fever, dry cough, tiredness, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, headache, and body aches. More serious symptoms include difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, loss of speech or movement. For more information visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)
- *Stay home if you feel sick* or have symptoms- Transmission is commonly occurring in workplaces and in schools because people attend even though they are ill or symptomatic.
- *Get tested-* if you have been exposed to a known positive case or if you have symptoms, get tested immediately and self-quarantine until you receive the results. Testing is available for free at two locations in Custer County including the Public Health Agency front parking lot (walk-in basis) between 10:00 AM and 1:00 PM every Friday and at the Medical Clinic between 1:00 PM and 4:00 PM by appointment every Tuesday.
- *Get a flu shot-* Flu season is underway. Getting a flu shot helps to protect you and your family from flu and reduces the chances that you will require hospital care if you do contract influenza.
- Move public and private gatherings and events outdoors whenever possible to increase ventilation.
- People at high risk for COVID infection (those persons who are not fully vaccinated with conditions that increase their risk of severe COVID disease) should consider staying out of public indoor spaces until the case rate has declined significantly.
- Regularly clean high-touch surfaces and objects with a diluted chlorine or 60%+ alcohol solution.
- Maintain regular exercise, a healthy diet, and consistent sleep patterns to maintain a healthy immune system. Vitamins D3 and C, and Zinc are often used to support a robust immune system.

For additional information regarding mitigation strategies visit:

- Quick Links to COVID-19 Community Mitigation Strategies and Tools: Resources for States, Tribes, and Localities- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavlr.us/2019-ncov/downloads/php/open-QuickLinks/comnucliy_mitigation-quicklinks.com.

IV. FACE COVERINGS

CCDPHE advises that all people regardless of their COVID vaccination status will improve protection for themselves and others when they wear a snugly-fitting KN95 or N85 mask when in crowded public indoor spaces, even in locations where the organization, government, or businesses do not require it. This practice is especially important when frequenting restaurants, bars, gyms, and other crowded places that do not require proof of vaccination for staff and patrons.

V. SCHOOLS, CHILDCARE, and HIGHER EDUCATION

CCDPHE further advises that all preschool through 12th grade schools, childcare facilities (regardless of licensure status), extracurricular activities, and higher education institutions make masks available to all persons in indoor school, childcare, and activity settings, in alignment with CDC guidance. Schools and childcare facilities have adopted routine testing strategies, improved ventilation of indoor spaces, conducted operations outdoors when possible, and emphasized routine hand-hygiene.

Resources:

- K-12 Schools Covid-19 Mitigation Toolkit - [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-mitigation-toolkit.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-mitigation-toolkit.html)
- Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 schools [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html)
- Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)- [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/considerations.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/considerations.html)

VI. CONGREGATE LIVING FACILITIES

CCDPHE also encourages all congregate living facilities including long term care facilities, shelters, jails and situations where multiple families reside in a single home to require face coverings (preferably fitted KN95 or N95) for all persons while they are indoors or in the facility.

VII. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

PDPHE reminds all transportation providers including schools and extracurricular activities that the CDC has recommended that individuals over the age of 2 to wear a face covering while riding in any public transportation or conveyance.

VIII. RESOURCES

For additional information, please contact the CCPHA webpage.

CCDPHE will continue to evaluate the prevalence and risks of COVID-19 in Custer and surrounding counties and will adjust this Advisory as needed.

Issued at noon on November 05, 2021

Clifford Brown, Custer County Director of Public Health and Environment