

## COVID Update August 14, 2020

Cases appear to continue trending down slightly in S.C. The week ending Aug 7, we had 8,386 new cases, down from 10,211 the week before, and hospitalizations are down slightly as well.

The percent positive test rate continues to fluctuate but is overall trending downward. It was 20% on August 10 and 15.7% on August 12.

A recent study on mask efficacy showed that multiple layer cloth face masks work fairly well, but that bandanas that are open at the bottom do not, and gaiters pulled over the lower face actually increased small particle release, perhaps by breaking droplets up, so they are not recommended.

It appears that an exemption to the ban on large outdoor gatherings in S.C. is being granted to essentially any organization that requests it, so numerous large sporting events, including car racing at Darlington, will be going forward. Masks are required but the enforcement will be difficult.

School re-opening plans are in progress, with no school districts insisting on the five full day in person attendance that Gov. McMaster promoted. He is encouraging daily public reporting of COVID-19 cases in schools among students and staff. Currently, schools are required to report potential exposures to close contacts (less than 6 feet away for 15 minutes or more). \$10 million in coronavirus aid funding will be used to purchase PPE for schools.

With widespread delays in testing turn around, the AMA sent a letter to HHS on Tuesday recommending that testing be prioritized to those with symptoms, known exposure, or pre-procedure, with less priority for those needing clearance for return to work or travel.

The airline industry, suffering severe revenue loss, has encouraged return to air travel and all airlines have implemented distancing and mask wearing requirements, and most do not have a medical exemption to the mask wearing. (However, Dr. Fauci said last week that, at age almost 80, he's not flying yet 😊 ).

Last week the director of DHEC, Dr. Linda Bell, stated that she regretted not indicating to the public at the time that Gov. McMaster's decision to re-open, in May, was at least a week earlier than public health officials recommended.

The press reported last week that on July 31, the University of Cincinnati and the College Conservatory of Music shared results of a study on aerosol production in singing and playing of woodwind instruments (one of several studies that have been undertaken). Singing is the most 'productive' activity in terms of aerosols, but masks can mitigate the risk. Woodwind instruments were surprisingly low producers of aerosol. As a result of that study, the local school district is permitting band practice again, with participants in small groups, spaced 10 feet apart. Some schools also require masks with slits for the instrument to reach the mouth, horn covers, sanitizing of instruments, and saliva receptacles.

The U.S. is now at over 5 million confirmed COVID cases and 166,000 deaths.