

COVID Update April 30, 2021

Cases have been declining in SC and Greenville, Anderson, Oconee, and Spartanburg counties are finally in the 'moderate' (51-200 cases per 100k population) two-week cumulative case range.

Nationally the US now has more than 32 million confirmed coronavirus cases and 572,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

More than 290 million vaccine doses have been distributed in the U.S. and more than 228 million have been administered, according to the CDC.

SC lags somewhat behind other states in vaccine administration, but state public health officials are reiterating their commitment to getting to herd immunity, or about 70% to 80% of the population vaccinated. About 40% of South Carolina residents 16 and up are partly vaccinated and about 30% fully vaccinated, according to data from the state Department of Health and Environmental Control. However, two-thirds of South Carolinians over the age of 65 have been full vaccinated.

Vaccine demand is waning, unfortunately, resulting in several states declining their full weekly allotments of vaccine. More than 5 million Americans have not received their second Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, which is 8% of those who received them.

On Tuesday it was announced that the European Union will allow fully vaccinated Americans to visit this summer.

On Monday the Johnson and Johnson vaccine distribution was resumed. It had been paused due to abnormal blood clot formation in some recipients, which occurred in 15 individuals out of almost 8 million doses given. It was decided that the benefit outweighed the risk because the side effect, though serious, is so rare. This vaccine only requires one dose and does not require freezing, making it especially useful in difficult to reach populations.

The City of Anderson allowed its mask mandate to expire on Tuesday.

Researchers at MIT published an article questioning the 'six-foot distance' rule indoors, finding that good air exchange and mask wearing decreased aerosol particle transmission while vigorous respiratory activity increased it. Small particles were so rapidly distributed throughout enclosed spaces that they felt the six-foot rule was of little value.

On Tuesday the CDC updated its mask guidance for fully vaccinated individuals, stating that they do not need to wear a mask outdoors unless the location is a large, crowded venue. Masks do not need to be worn during small outdoor gatherings with fully vaccinated family and friends, or at gatherings with a mixture of vaccinated and unvaccinated people, including at outdoor restaurants with friends from multiple households. Unvaccinated individuals should continue mask wearing outdoors at group gatherings.