

## COVID Update 7/2/2021

The delta variant(s) are on the way and it isn't going to be pretty.

The delta (India) variant B.1.617.2 now makes up 25% of COVID cases in the US overall; is doubling every two weeks; is at 40% in some areas of the country with large surges; and severely affects almost exclusively the unvaccinated. Vaccinated individuals who become ill with a delta variant experience only mild illness BUT can transmit the virus to others (unlike the previously prevalent B.1.2 and B.1.1.7 strains).

This is why the WHO, unlike the CDC, is now recommending masks even for vaccinated individuals.

In Israel, where 80% of the population are fully vaccinated, a COVID surge occurred within weeks of removing their lockdown. Half of the adults who contracted the delta COVID strain were vaccinated, but only had mild disease. Most cases involve school age children and young adults. Israel is locking down again, requiring masks and also mandatory quarantine for all exposures, even in the fully vaccinated.

In Missouri, where, like South Carolina, vaccination rates are low, a surge has occurred that quickly filled their ICU's to almost the same level as during the worst of the pandemic in January. In Springfield, Missouri, which is hard hit, 65% of ICU patients are under 40 years old, and pregnant women are also disproportionately affected.

South Carolina is eleventh in the nation in vaccination rates, with only 42.3% fully vaccinated, and 48.3% having received one dose. The delta variant is three times more transmissible than the original strains in the US and also evades native immunity (in people who have recovered from COVID) 20-55% of the time. Although vaccination is not as effective against the delta variants, it is 80% protective against any infection; 88% protective against symptomatic infection; and 94% protective against hospitalization or death.

Dr. George Rutherford, an epidemiologist at University of California-San Francisco, was quoted as saying about the delta variant, 'If you're vaccinated, it's nothing. If not, you're toast.'

The bottom line is: delta is dangerous, it's coming, you need to get vaccinated ASAP, and even if you are vaccinated, you should consider continuing to wear your mask when in a large group.