

COVID Update 7/30/2021

Nationally, cases and deaths from COVID-19 rose again in virtually all the US, where 83% of new cases are the Delta variant. Essentially all hospitalizations and deaths are in the unvaccinated. However, the Delta variant, unlike previous ones, CAN infect vaccinated people who then can shed high volumes of virus even though their own illness is mild. The Delta strain appears to be more transmissible, and is causing severe illness and death even in young healthy adults, who are the majority of the unvaccinated populations. The average rolling daily case rate has risen from 13,877 on July 1 to over 60,000 today, and the weekly death rate from COVID nationally is exceeding 2,000 for the first time in a month.

Because of the rise in cases and the new data regarding transmissible infection even in vaccinated individuals, on Tuesday the CDC issued a new guidance recommending mask wearing again, indoors, even for vaccinated people, in areas of significant COVID incidence (like South Carolina.) There is concern that vaccinated individuals, if not wearing masks, will contract mild COVID themselves, but spread it to children who cannot yet be vaccinated, and the elderly and immune compromised who may have not developed a good immune response to the vaccine, and may therefore become severely ill.

In its new guidance, the CDC also added information that fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission, particularly if they are immunocompromised or at [increased risk for severe disease](#) from COVID-19, or if they have someone in their household who is immunocompromised, at increased risk of severe disease or not fully vaccinated.

Another new CDC recommendation for fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to be tested 3-5 days after exposure, and to wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.

The CDC also recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status

In SC, daily cases have recently risen exponentially:

July 1 = 147 cases statewide
July 15 = 366
July 20 = 521
July 23 = 1,029
July 25, 1,089
July 28 = 1,392

Hospitalizations and ICU admissions in SC due to COVID have more than doubled in the past month.

Although very small numbers of random samples have been sent for genotyping so the true number is not known, it is assumed that very soon the majority of SC cases will be the Delta variant

On Wednesday July 28, the entire state was at 'moderate' incidence level with the exception of Sumter, Dillon, Morris and Horry counties which are 'high'. Today, July 30, the entire state is at 'high' level with the exception of 9 counties. Greenville, Spartanburg, Pickens and Oconee are all 'high'.

In SC in the over 12 population, almost 54% have received one dose of vaccine, while nationally that number is 57%. In the US, 49.1% of the population is fully vaccinated. In SC, 44.3% are fully vaccinated.

On Monday, more than 50 major American health care and medical organizations called for employers of health and long-term care workers to mandate COVID-19 vaccines, saying it's "the logical fulfillment of the ethical commitment" of workers to put the needs of patients first.