

COVID Update November 17, 2021

Cases continue to increase overall in the U.S, up 18% in the past week, with increases in 32 states. Most of these have been in the Northeast and Midwest.

In SC, as reported by Johns Hopkins, our daily average cases per 100k for the past week remains relatively low at 13, which put the state at the 'moderate' level now (less than 10 cases would be 'low' for this statistic). Hospitalizations declined 12% and the death rate remained about the same. In Greenville County, as well as Anderson, Oconee, Pickens and Spartanburg, average daily cases per 100k were a little up (1%), which put Greenville County at 18 new cases per 100k population over the past week. The SC DHEC numbers continue to trend slowly downward, with 35 counties now in the 'moderate' level, two in the 'low' level, and 11 in the 'high' category, including Greenville County, of new daily cases per 100k population over two weeks. Test positivity rate is down to 3.8%, for the past week. Our state has not been below the 'moderate' disease activity level since March 2020.

Infections are down worldwide except for Europe: It was reported by the Associated Press that the number of coronavirus cases has risen in Europe for the fifth consecutive week, making it the only world region where COVID-19 is still increasing, the World Health Organization reported. A 53-country region in Europe and central Asia faces the "real threat" of a resurgence of the coronavirus pandemic in the coming weeks or already is experiencing a new wave of infections. The WHO report said case counts are beginning to near record levels again and the pace of transmission in the region, which stretches as far east as the former Soviet republics in central Asia, is of "grave concern." Hospitalization rates due to COVID-19 in the 53-country region more than doubled over the last week. If that trajectory continues, the region could see another 500,000 pandemic deaths by February.

In its weekly report on the pandemic, the U.N. health agency said new cases jumped by 6% in Europe compared to an 18% increase the previous week. The weekly number of new infections in other regions either fell or remained about the same, according to the report.

The sharpest drops were seen in the Middle East, where new cases decreased by 12%, and in Southeast Asia and Africa, where they fell by 9%. The coronavirus infection rate was by far the highest in Europe, which reported about 192 new cases per 100,000 people, followed by the Americas, which had about 72 new cases per 100,000.

WHO said the continuing rise in confirmed cases across Europe has been driven mostly by Britain, Russia, Turkey and Romania, the report showed.

Some scientists worry that waning immunity from vaccinations across Europe could allow even more people to fall ill from COVID-19 during the winter season.

Responses to the rise in cases vary. The Austrian government ordered a nationwide lockdown for unvaccinated people starting midnight Sunday to slow the fast spread of the coronavirus. The move prohibits unvaccinated individuals older than age 12 from leaving their homes except for basic activities. Authorities are concerned that hospital staff will no longer be able to handle the growing influx of COVID-19 patients.

On Friday Nov. 5 Pfizer announced in an interim analysis – released prior to completion of the trial – that its experimental pill Paxlovid reduced the risk of hospitalization and death for high-risk patients taking part in a trial of the drug. Although the data were not released, Pfizer reported an 89% reduction in the risk of hospitalization or [death from Covid-19](#) if patients got it soon enough (preferably within five days of onset of symptoms). The pill is what's known as a protease inhibitor, designed to stop the virus from multiplying. It will be administered with a booster such as ritonavir (the protease inhibitor class of medication is widely used very successfully in HIV treatment.) Pfizer announced on Monday Nov 15 that it would provide the formula for its new COVID-19 pill, Paxlovid, to third world countries. The company has faced criticism for not providing the formula for its vaccine so that less wealthy countries could manufacture it themselves.

The CDC this week added 4 more counties to its 'level four' travel risk due to COVID, making the total number now 81. Countries in that category have more than 500 cases per 100k population in the past 28 days.

On Friday, the Fifth Circuit Appeals Court in New Orleans upheld its decision to put on hold an order by President Joe Biden for companies with 100 workers or more to require COVID-19 vaccines, rejecting a challenge by his administration. A three-member panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans affirmed its ruling despite

the Biden administration's position that halting implementation of the vaccine mandate could lead to dozens or even hundreds of deaths. The rule was issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and mandates that businesses with at least 100 employees require staff to get vaccinated or face weekly tests and face mask requirements. White House officials had no immediate comment on the ruling,