



JACKSON COUNTY

Health & Human Services

**Health & Human Services
Public Health Division**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Updates

[Medford, Oregon] — Today, Jackson County Public Health strongly recommends that everyone 5 years and older (2 and older if tolerated) wear masks in indoor public spaces, regardless of vaccination status. The Centers for Disease Control and the Oregon Health Authority have advised universal mask use for all indoor public spaces, regardless of vaccination status. The Centers for Disease Control has also advised universal masking for teachers, staff members, and students in schools, regardless of vaccination status.

This recommendation is being issued due to the rise of COVID-19 cases in Jackson County, the low vaccination rate, and the continued increase of the Delta variant in Oregon. Since June 27, 2021, Jackson County Public Health has seen a significant increase in the number of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, with both categories increasing over 200%.

The majority of the current cases in Jackson County are among those that are not vaccinated. During May and June, the case rate was six times higher among those not vaccinated, and .1% of fully vaccinated persons got COVID-19 in May and June. The Oregon Health Authority provides a monthly update on [breakthrough cases](#); Region 5 includes Jackson and Josephine Counties.

Local Public Health Professionals are concerned about the Delta variant and low vaccination rates in Jackson County. The Delta variant is more contagious than other COVID-19 variants that have been circulating. The Delta variant has mutations on the spike protein that make it easier to infect human cells. That means people may be more contagious if they contract the virus and easily spread the virus to others. A recent study has shown the Delta variant viral load is 1,000 times higher than the original version of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. With the viral load being 1,000 times higher, this means that an infected person is shedding more of the virus, increasing the probability that a close contact will be exposed to more virus, become contagious quickly after being exposed, and infect more people. Jackson County has a 54.7% vaccination rate for those 18 years and older; this is the 17th lowest vaccination rate in the state.

COVID-19 vaccines are effective and a critical tool to bring the pandemic under control. However, no vaccines are 100% effective at preventing illness in vaccinated people. There will be a small percentage of fully vaccinated people who still get sick, are hospitalized, or die from COVID-19. [Vaccine effectiveness studies](#) provide a growing body of evidence that mRNA; COVID-19 vaccines reduce the risk of COVID-19, including severe illness and hospitalizations, among people who are fully vaccinated by 90% or more.

“Because of the low vaccination rate in Jackson County, we will see the virus spread when people engage in riskier activities that include more contact with people and where prevention strategies are not being used, such as getting vaccinated and/or wearing a mask,” states Tanya Phillips, Health Promotion Manager for Jackson County Public Health.

“It will continue to take a multilayered approach to stop the spread of COVID-19; there is no one strategy, that when used alone, will stop the pandemic,” states Dr. Jim Shames, Jackson County Health Officer. Vaccines are the most critical tool we have to stop this pandemic. Wearing masks and using other prevention tools will remain necessary until more people are vaccinated, and herd immunity can be reached. A multilayered approach will consist of getting vaccinated, wearing a mask, staying home when you are sick, staying away from others who are ill, good hygiene practices, and physical distancing.”

Daily COVID-19 Cases

As of 12:01 a.m. on July 28, 2021, Jackson County Public Health reports 91 new COVID-19 cases. This brings the total COVID-19 cases in Jackson County to 12,415.

COVID-19 Related Deaths

Jackson County Public Health reports 2 new COVID-19 deaths, bringing the total to 153 since the beginning of the pandemic.

Jackson County’s 152nd COVID-19 death is a 92-year-old woman who tested positive on June 5 and died on June 18 at their place of residence. They had underlying health conditions.

Jackson County’s 152nd COVID-19 death is a 99-year-old woman who tested positive on May 7 and died on July 6 at their place of residence. They had underlying health conditions.

For more information:

- The public can call 211-information with general questions
- OHA Emerging Respiratory Disease page: www.healthoregon.org/coronavirus
- CDC COVID-19 page: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- OHA COVID-19 Vaccine: <https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-vaccine>
- CDC COVID-19 Vaccine: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>
- Jackson County HHS Vaccine: <https://jacksoncountyor.org/hhs/COVID-19/COVID-19-News/covid-19-vaccine>
- CDC Travel within the U.S.: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>
- Jackson County Health and Human Services: <http://jacksoncountyor.org/hhs/COVID-19>
- Oregon COVID-19 Testing Location Finder: <https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing>
- Review the [Statewide Mask, Face Covering, Face Shield Guidance](#) for detailed information

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