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Press Release
Gallatin City-County Health Department Urges Community to Remain Vigilant in Preventing the Spread of COVID-19

The Gallatin City-County health officials are urging the community to remain vigilant in preventing the spread of COVID-19 as cases in the county are slowly rising.

On Monday, July 26, Gallatin City-County Health Department reported 24 new COVID-19 cases. The highest new case count in two months. As of Wednesday, July 28 total active cases have risen to 83 in the county, with six people currently hospitalized. Our data shows a 50% increase in active cases from July 17 when we reported 35 active cases. Additionally, vaccination data indicates that only 55% of Gallatin County residents are fully vaccinated, and 97% of hospitalizations from April 1 to July 9 have been unvaccinated.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced on Tuesday it has updated its guidance for fully vaccinated individuals given the available evidence on the Delta variant currently circulating in the United States. In addition to other updates, the CDC added a recommendation for fully vaccinated - as well as their existing recommendation for unvaccinated people - to wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas with “substantial or high transmission.” This new guidance categorizes areas of substantial or high transmission based on cases per 100,000 in the last seven (7) days. According to CDC criteria, Gallatin County is considered to currently have substantial transmission.

Health Officer Lori Christenson said, “it is important to note that based on local epidemiology and sequential level of transmission described on the CDC’s website, Gallatin County could quickly move between moderate, substantial, or high. Based on the size of our population, just one or two cases per day could move us up or down on the current scale.”

Christenson added, “instead of focusing on day-to-day movement between categories, it is important to understand we are seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases in our community. Every layer of protection counts right now, and that means pulling out those masks and wearing them in public indoor places regardless of your vaccination status especially when Gallatin County is in the substantial or high transmission category. Given where we stand currently, and what we are trying to prevent in the future, I anticipate the recommendation to wear a mask to remain until we see case numbers drop again.”

Children ages 2 to 11 are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine at this time and should wear masks and be reminded of the importance of good handwashing practices.

Kallie Kujawa, Bozeman Health COVID-19 Incident Command Lead added, “we are at an important point where those who have delayed vaccination should step forward and protect themselves and our community. We can slow the associated illness, suffering, and in some cases death with higher vaccination coverage.”
Dr. Mark D. Winton, MD FACP Infectious Diseases and Deputy Medical Director of GCCHD states, “new recommendations are coming out in light of the Delta variant of COVID-19. The new variant is 100 times more contagious than the original strain, and just as serious.”

Dr. Winton added, “The data shows that masks are beneficial at preventing spread of infection, along with the enhanced cleaning, social distancing, and hand washing measures that we have been doing this past year. Voluntary masking now may prevent a new wave of COVID-19 spread. The vaccine is highly effective and is recommended, but new variants on the horizon may slip through this protection. Consider your safety, but also consider those at higher risk around you for severe consequences of COVID-19 infection.”

Local health officials agree it is important that all individuals eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine be vaccinated, and it is especially important that parents and guardians of children 12 and up get them vaccinated before heading back to school next month.

**COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics**
Vaccination clinics are available throughout the county. COVID-19 vaccines are FREE for anyone both insured and uninsured, and staff are available to sit down and discuss any questions or concerns a patient may have before they decide to get vaccinated.

- **Bozeman Health Deaconess, Entrance 4**
  - Offering the Pfizer vaccine to anyone 12 years and older.
  - Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

- **Montana State University - Staff and Students Only**
  - The vaccine site is located off Kagy near the northeast corner of Bobcat Stadium.
  - MSU is offering the Moderna vaccine to students and staff who are 18 years and older.
  - For hours of operation and to sign up to be vaccinated please [visit their website](#).

- **Pharmacies**
  - Many local pharmacies are offering walk-in and appointments for COVID-19 vaccines.
  - Search the [vaccines.gov website](https://www.vaccines.gov) for the type of vaccine and locations.

- **Mobile Clinics - No Appointment Needed!**
  - [Bozeman Health’s HealthCare Connections mobile clinic](#) provides the Janssen vaccine to anyone 18 years or older at many local hotspots throughout the county.
  - Best Practice Medicine provides both Pfizer and Janssen vaccines to anyone 12 years or older at their mobile locations.

**COVID-19 Testing**
COVID-19 testing is also critical to slow the spread of all strains of the virus, including the highly transmissible Delta variant. Testing is available at these locations.

- **b2 Urgent Care**
  - 1006 W Main Street, Bozeman
  - Daily from 8 to 7 p.m.

- **Belgrade Clinic Urgent Care**
  - 206 Alaska Frontage Road, Belgrade
  - Daily from 8 to 7 p.m.

- **b2 MicroCare**
  - 1805 W Oak Street #3, Bozeman
  - Daily from 8 to 7 p.m.

- **Deaconess Hospital**
  - Lot H, drive-through testing
  - Mon. through Thurs. from 8 to 1 p.m.

- **Montana State University - testing students enrolled for Summer or Fall 2021**
  - The testing site: off Kagy near the northeast corner of Bobcat Stadium
  - For hours of operation, please visit [their website](#).
In light of the new CDC guidance for fully vaccinated individuals, testing is recommended within 3-5 days of a known COVID-19 exposure in addition to monitoring symptoms and wearing a mask for 14 days post exposure.

“We urge the community to remain diligent, stay kind to one another, and remember we can do great things when we work together. I know the news to pull those masks out is frustrating for some; I had hoped we would not be at this point. The pandemic continues to pose a threat to our community’s health and we must do all we can collectively to slow transmission,” Christenson said.

The GCCHD Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for questions about COVID-19. Reach the Call Center by phone at 406-548-0123. The most accurate local source of information remains the GCCHD website.