

COVID-19 Report to Members ~ May 18, 2021

Reports are sent on Tuesdays, unless there's breaking news.

Reimbursement & Policy

[Mask rules for healthcare settings, updated guidance](#)

With last week's [change in mask guidance](#) for those who are [fully vaccinated](#), the CDC has updated their resources as well as provided guidance for healthcare facilities.

According to a communication between the CDC and AHA on May 13, the CDC stated that the new masking recommendations for those fully vaccinated do not apply in healthcare settings. Staff, patients, residents and visitors should continue to wear masks in hospitals and other healthcare facilities regardless of their vaccination status.

The revised guidance for those not in healthcare settings now states, "If you are fully vaccinated, you can resume activities that you did before the pandemic. Fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance." Officials have reinforced that businesses and workplaces may make their own determinations about masking in their facilities. This [infographic](#) can be useful to share as you continue to educate your communities on practices to keep them safe from contracting COVID.

Quality & Patient Safety

[Idaho vaccination update](#)

Idaho is now encouraging providers to vaccinate individuals even if they don't have others waiting for the additional doses in the vial. As supply outpaces demand, health officials want to eliminate barriers for those wishing to get vaccinated and have changed the policy accordingly. This week, Idaho ordered approximately 36% of the vaccine allocation available to the state.

One change that could help keep waste down is by manufacturers making single-dose or fewer dose vials, which states are clamoring for. At this time, there isn't any indication if the CDC will approve these changes. In other manufacturing news, Pfizer has said they will begin making their vaccine available in 450-dose trays to help facilitate distribution to other locations by early June. This can be extremely helpful in getting smaller quantities of doses to more rural parts of the state.

On the national front, President Biden said yesterday that cases are down in all fifty states, with deaths at their lowest level since April of 2020. As of last week, 60% of American adults have received at least one vaccine dose. To continue encouraging vaccinations, the Administration is reimbursing employers for giving employees paid time off to receive their vaccines. In addition, both Uber and Lyft will offer free rides to and from vaccination appointments from May 25 – July 4. The Administration has set a goal of 70% of adults receiving at least one shot by July 4.

For more vaccination data, visit Idaho's [COVID Vaccine Dashboard](#).

Resources & Equipment

[Rural disparities in vaccination coverage](#)

Rural communities often have a higher proportion of residents who lack health insurance, live with comorbidities or disabilities, are aged ≥65 years, and have limited access to health care facilities with intensive care capabilities, which places these residents at increased risk for COVID-19-associated morbidity and mortality.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report ~ May 18, 2021](#)

Although there are many ways to classify a place as being urban or rural, most metrics place over 25% of Idaho's population in a rural area. Epidemiologists at CDC and colleagues used 2013 county-level definitions based on proximity to metropolitan areas to explore disparities in COVID-19 vaccination coverage between urban and rural counties during December 14, 2020–April 10, 2021.

Recently, the CDC reviewed national vaccine administration data for adults aged ≥18 years who received their first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, or a single dose of the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine. Across the US, "Vaccination coverage was lower in rural counties (38.9%) than in urban counties (45.7%) overall and among adults aged 18–64 years (29.1% rural, 37.7% urban), those aged ≥65 years (67.6% rural, 76.1% urban), women (41.7% rural, 48.4% urban), and men (35.3% rural, 41.9% urban)."

The [IDHW dashboard](#) displays Idaho-specific information, including county-level vaccination data. Vaccination coverage was 42.6% in Idaho's 12 urban counties (Ada, Boise, Canyon, Gem, Owyhee, Bannock, Bonneville, Butte, Franklin, Jefferson, Kootenai, and Nez Perce) and 36.9% in the remaining 32 rural counties, which constitute 32.4% of the population. In Idaho, about twice as many rural residents compared with urban residents traveled outside their county of residence for their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Every vaccination matters, and despite lower population densities and a smaller proportion of the population, urban/rural COVID-19 disparities impede progress toward the end of the pandemic. "Vaccine hesitancy in rural areas is a major barrier that public health practitioners, health care providers, and local partners need to address to achieve vaccination equity," the report's authors noted. CDC recommends focused, multi-partner efforts between public health practitioners, health care providers, pharmacies, community-based organizations, faith leaders, and local employers to improve access and uptake, particularly in rural areas.

Virtual Meetings & Education

[Webinar ~ Pregnancy and the Vaccine](#)

During this CDC update, experts will discuss vaccine safety and efficacy for pregnant women. Panelists will present the latest scientific information, discuss ways people can protect themselves and others, and answer questions.

Pregnant during a Pandemic: What the data say about COVID-19 and the vaccine

Monday, May 24 ~ 11a MTN / 10a PAC

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