



Washburn County Health Department

Washburn County Health and Human Services Department
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 08/02/2021

UPDATES TO MASK GUIDANCE FOR THE PREVENTION OF COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently updated its mask guidance for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals in light of a rapid increase in COVID-19 cases caused by the highly contagious Delta variant. Vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals should wear masks in counties that are experiencing “substantial” or “high” levels of community transmission. Washburn County is currently experiencing “substantial” levels of community transmission. At this time the Washburn County Health Department advises all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, should wear masks when in public.

Previously CDC amended its guidance to allow fully vaccinated individuals to resume normal activities without the use of masks. This guidance was based on evidence from previously circulating variants of the COVID-19 virus that showed lower risk of transmission to others by a vaccinated individual if they contracted the virus. The Delta variant is significantly more infectious than the previously circulating variants due to a substantially higher viral load. While vaccinated individuals are less likely to contract the virus and get sick, evidence suggests that, once infected, they may be able to spread it to others at a similar rate that unvaccinated individuals are able to spread it. Further research is being conducted to confirm this.

Vaccination remains our best strategy for preventing severe illness and death from COVID-19 infections. No vaccine is 100% effective at preventing infection, however the COVID-19 vaccines in use in the United States work extremely well at preventing hospitalization and death. In the fully vaccinated individuals who have contracted COVID-19, their infections are more likely to be asymptomatic or exhibit mild symptoms that can be managed at home.

All individuals 12 and older are eligible for vaccination. Pfizer is currently the only vaccine authorized for ages 12-17. Pfizer, Moderna, and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson are approved for all adults 18 and older. Eligible individuals are strongly encouraged to seek vaccination in order to protect those in our community unable to get vaccinated. Children 11 and younger are not yet eligible for vaccination, some people with weakened immune systems are unable to get vaccinated, and those with allergies to vaccine components are unable to get vaccinated.

Over the past week cases have risen rapidly in Washburn County. It’s on all of us to do our part to protect our community: get vaccinated if you are eligible, wear a mask in public, avoid large gatherings, practice good hand hygiene, and practice physical distancing as much as possible.

The Washburn County Health Department currently offers limited Pfizer vaccination at the Health Department in Shell Lake by calling 715-635-4400 to schedule an appointment.

For more COVID-19 information, visit <https://www.co.washburn.wi.us/news/public-health/Coronavirus-Outbreak>. To see the CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker and levels of community transmission statewide, visit <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>