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City-Cowley County  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 14, 2022

### **County Wide COVID-19 Update**

The health department monitors the health of county residents. The following is an update to inform the community of the current status of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cowley County.

**Respiratory infections in Cowley County are being discovered at record levels.** This overall condition likely will not change anytime soon. All residents are urged to take all available precautions to avoid the contraction and spread of illness.

### **LOCAL SCHOOLS:**

Local schools have returned but individually are amending their attendance and infection control. Students that are showing symptoms of illness should closely follow the district policies for COVID-19 infect. Contact the school RN if you have questions about local testing for students.

Some school districts are considering shorting protocols dealing with COVID infection, the PHO remains firm that in Cowley we must maintain the current 10-day protocol without exception. Data in the following sections will make it evident as to why I am taking this position.

### **COVID-19 TESTING:**

The ability to test at the Health Department was dealt a severe shock this week as supply chain issues and the reallocation of tests was announced at the state level. Please refer to the public information releases earlier this week for more information on that topic.

The Health Department is still providing testing and we are working hard to find new testing resources to keep you safe. If you develop symptoms and need a test, please contact the Winfield Office and staff will help you, detail the process, and get you scheduled.

PLEASE NOTE: The Health Department DOES NOT perform return to work testing. If your employer requires that, it is their responsibility to have that provided by a pay for service vendor. If you are identified as ill through testing, isolate as required, and recover fully in the 10-day period, you are allowed to return to normal activity after day 10. To test again wastes a test and if you need a PCR test it is likely that it will see remnants of the virus for 30 to 90 days post infection. Please do not request such testing as you will be politely denied that service.



**COWLEY COUNTY ILLNESS REPORT BY THE NUMBERS:**

The positivity rate for the last week jumped to 24.9%. Testing volumes were at all-time highs. On average more than 200 people are testing in Cowley County each day.

Since the start of the pandemic, over 7,000 COVID cases have been confirmed in Cowley County. Four thousand one hundred fifty-nine (4,159) of those cases have occurred during 2021 (as of December 30<sup>th</sup>). Overall, one hundred thirty-four (134) Cowley County residents have died from complications related to COVID-19 since March of 2020.

Month to month new case information is presented numerically in the tables below:

Month/Year	New Cases
January 2021	828
February 2021	304
March 2021	90
April 2021	47
May 2021	59
June 2021	28
July 2021	153
August 2021	488
September 2021	592
October 2021	386
November 2021	606
December 2021*	653
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4159</b>

Month/Year	January 2021	January 2022*
New Cases	828	1466

Year Total	2021	2022
Total Cases	4159	1466
% of cases	100%	35%

This chart details what is happening currently. 1466 new cases in 13 days. Surpasses the highest ever monthly total. The current illness numbers are equivalent to 35% of the yearly total for 2021. That is very dangerous and disturbing.

In seeing these numbers and by personally manning the test lane each day I have witnessed that many residents are suffering and ill. I pray that this trend does not sustain for 45 days but that is what data from other countries indicates is likely to happen. I have held true to the promise to not restrict activities and minimize seating at events. I have always claimed we should find a way to deal with the new reality of a world with COVID-19. However, I hope you can see by looking at this data why I will not change the current 10-day protocol for isolation prior to return to normal activity. To return after 5 days will endanger others. Going back to work will expose co-workers and customers and result in continual illness spread. Do not return to normal activity until you are physically fit to do so, secondary infection from other illness can easily set in and result in further missed work or education.

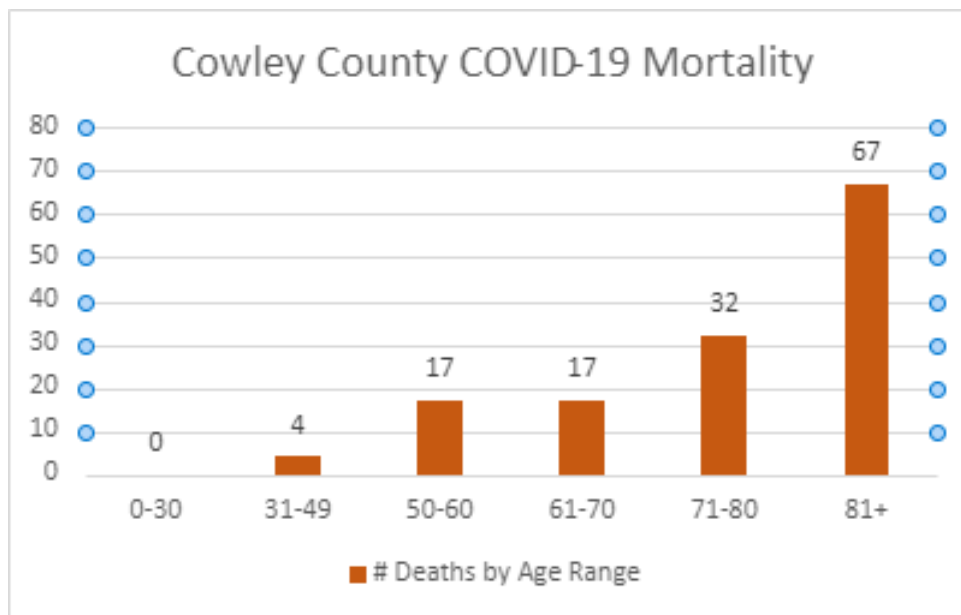
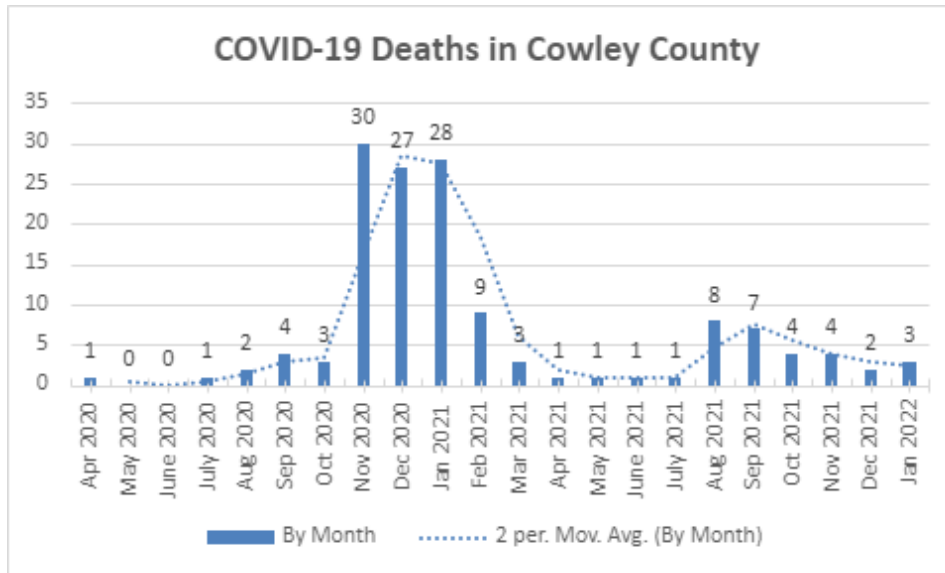
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In January we have recorded 3 more deaths to Cowley County residents. Our total now stands at 137.



Cowley County remains identified as an area where infection remains widespread. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has updated their reporting of the ongoing pandemic for the state and individual counties including weekly county rankings. You can visit their website for more data: <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/160/COVID-19-in-Kansas> .

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## **PERSONAL CARE AND ILLNESS PREVENTION:**

### **Remember your individual health status is vital in combating illness of all kinds.**

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle includes eating nutritious foods, maintaining a healthy body weight, staying physically active, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate rest. If you and your doctor believe the use of vitamins and supplements can aid in keeping you healthy, please use them.

At this point in time, we have gone over and over the steps people should take to prevent the contraction and spread of a respiratory virus. Please take those precautions to protect yourself and your loved ones.

If you do become ill, please do not participate in any group events until after you have fully recovered from your illness. For as long as the pandemic persists Cowley County residents are advised to take all necessary precautions to prevent the contraction and spread of ANY illness.

- Stay home if you feel ill.
- If you develop symptoms of illness, be tested to determine if you are infected.
- Wash your hands frequently and use hand sanitizer.
- Clean high touch surfaces with disinfecting cleaners (doors, counters etc.).
- Wear a mask that properly covers your nose and mouth in public.
- Avoid crowds and large social gatherings.
- When ill you **MUST** stay home and isolate from others so you will not spread the virus or any other illness.
- Please be kind and respectful of others.

The final remark today stems from a question that was posed to me from a local resident in the form of a statement.

“Tom, this really isn’t as bad as before – right?!”

My reply was pointed. “It is all in your perspective. If you stay well and no one in your family or close circle of friends is affected it’s no big thing at all. If you are in the daily test lane it becomes a greater issue, and God forbid if you are one that ends up severely ill and hospitalized or worse yet in the morgue then yeah it’s really bad.”

If things remain the same, we could see more than 2500 new cases this month alone. Those are terrible odds in a county of 34,500 residents.

The next health update will be published Friday, January 21, 2022. Stay well.