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City-Cowley County
Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 8, 2021

County Wide COVID-19 Update

The City-Cowley County Health Department monitors the health of county residents. The following is a weekly update to inform the community of the current status of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cowley County.

September concluded with 592 residents contracting new cases of COVID-19. With several “end of summer” events now past we are hoping that case rates continue to decline as we prepare for the upcoming holiday months (November through January) that in 2020-21 were extremely bleak with thousands of new illnesses found. To date this year over 14,400 residents in the county have been fully vaccinated. Additionally, over 5,200 residents have taken ill and survived. That means that as a population we are nearing 20,000 total people who should have an acquired (vaccination) or natural (survived and recovered) immunity against COVID-19. That means as of the start of October 2021 more that 56% of our county population has some immunity which hopefully will result in less COVID-19 illness in the months to come.

LOCAL SCHOOLS:

Local school districts are continuing to work to minimize the spread of all illnesses especially COVID-19. The health and safety of children in our community will remain our highest priority. In order for children to be in school they must be healthy. Everyone remains in agreement that families want children to be in school in person and benefit from classroom learning. We need everyone to work together to make sure that the school year is successful.

Personal activities connected to normal daily life remain the pathway for the continued spread of COVID-19 in the county. We continue to witness the ebb and flow of new cases centered in families with school aged children. Please remember to not send a sick child to school for any reason. If a family member becomes ill with COVID-19 every family member **MUST** quarantine if they are not vaccinated or have natural immunity from a previously documented case of COVID-19. The ill person(s) **MUST** isolate for a minimum of 10 (ten) days.

You should always contact the Health Department or your local physician for specific guidance about how to deal with the illness in your home. The most important thing to remember is to not spread the illness to others.

The same care and process must be followed if you have a child in daycare.

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COVID-19 TESTING:

If you develop symptoms of illness of any kind you are encouraged to be tested. The Health Department continues to offer rapid antigen testing in our daily drive-up lane. The antigen test detects proteins from the virus that causes COVID-19 which are present in the respiratory system. Test results are generally available within 15 minutes following sample processing. Results of the tests are transmitted to people through a text message or an email. These tests are quick and a good tool to identify people with illness. We will also continue to offer PCR testing which is more sensitive and definitive in confirming the presence of COVID-19. If you have illness symptoms and need testing please call the office and we will provide you details for when the testing lane will be open each day.

COWLEY COUNTY ILLNESS REPORT BY THE NUMBERS:

Testing rates in Cowley County for COVID-19 have remained steady due to increased testing in schools. During the past week 524 tests were performed. The positivity rate for that time period was 8.4% which is down slightly from the previous week (10.05%). The downward trend is encouraging, and we are hopeful it remains that way.

A comparison of the overall rates of infection in the non-vaccinated and vaccinated populations (see table below) illustrates the significant trend in illness spread.

Since March 31, 2021	Number of Cases	Percent of total
All cases	1480	100%
Vaccinated (break through)	130	8.8%
Non-Vaccinated	1350	91.2%

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

Month/Year	New Cases
April 2021	47
May 2021	56
June 2021	28
July 2021	153
August 2021	488
September 2021	592
October 2021* to date	116

COVID-19 Break through Cases	
May	2
June	2
July	25
August	50
September	45
October	5
TOTAL	130

Break through Cases by Vaccine	
Moderna	70
Pfizer	39
Janssen	21
Total	130

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Since the start of the pandemic, 5379 Cowley County residents have been confirmed as positive for COVID-19. One (1) additional death occurred in Cowley County last week. One hundred twenty-three (123) Cowley County residents have died from complications related to COVID-19 infection since March of 2020.

Cowley County, along with all counties in Kansas, remains identified as an area where infection is considered 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> .

OTHER COVID-19 NEWS:

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the Pfizer mRNA vaccine for an additional 3rd dose administration. It remains suggested for people over age 65 or for people who are otherwise considered to be at high risk. (If you have questions about this, please call the Health Department office). The Moderna mRNA vaccine was also provided for individuals over age 65 and for those who are at high risk for specific health issues but has not yet been advised as being necessary to everyone that was previously vaccinated. We are awaiting approval for a broad-based 3rd dose that is currently being reviewed. We will notify the public when that occurs.

Pfizer has submitted case review data for expanding vaccination into the pediatric population. The FDA and CDC vaccine advisory committees are reviewing that currently. If approved the pediatric doses will vary based on age and body weight. Since the issue of vaccines for children is highly important it will likely take anywhere from 30 to 60 days to be reviewed and if found necessary then made available.

The news is of course teeming with stories about vaccine mandates. These are being issued through the federal government and through corporations or businesses as a condition for continued employment in many areas. Locally the Public Health Officer **IS NOT** issuing nor enforcing any type of local vaccination mandates. Locally our role remains the same. We will continue to provide current public health advice about local conditions relating to illness within the County.

As the Public Health Officer, I highly endorse the use of vaccines to prevent and stop the spread of illness. I am happy to talk to anyone about their concerns of any vaccine and explain the reasons I believe the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. While I support the use of vaccines, I will respect, and take into consideration the decisions of individuals. The virus does not listen to news reports or follow social media. The virus does not discriminate and knows no political ideology. It will continue to evolve and seek out a host that is unprotected in order to spread. Current data indicates a strong correlation that indicates that if you are not vaccinated your risk of infection from COVID-19 is significantly higher than if you were vaccinated. I hope

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that you look at what is happening locally and base your decisions about your health, including vaccinations, on those facts.

PERSONAL CARE AND ILLNESS PREVENTION:

Influenza vaccine is now available in the county and our efforts to provide public access to flu vaccines is underway. The first of two (2) drive through flu vaccination events was held on Wednesday October 6, 2021 in Arkansas City, KS at the Agri-business Center. We will conduct a 2nd drive through event in Winfield next Wednesday October 13, 2021 from 10:00 AM till 6:00 PM in building 4 at the Winfield Fairgrounds. Please see our website and Facebook for details.

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.

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 any symptoms of illness, be tested to determine if you are infected and to seek medical help.
- Wash your hands frequently and use hand sanitizer.
- Wear a mask in enclosed places if required to do so or if you so desire.
- Avoid crowds and large social gatherings if you believe those settings are a risk for you.
- You **MUST** stay home and isolate from others if you are ill so you will not spread the virus or any other illness to others.
- Please be kind and respectful of others.

We will issue an update next Friday afternoon October 15, 2021.

Stay well.