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City-Cowley County  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 12, 2021

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

The City-Cowley County 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.

November viral activity has increased significantly. The highest concentration of new cases identified are in families with children. ***Thus far in November the pediatric age group (0-18) has been the most effected with over 55% of new cases occurring in that age range. This is the first time since the pandemic began that the youngest segment of the population has been affected at a higher rate than adults.*** (See charts in the COVID-19 by the numbers section). The bump in activity has effected on grade school attendance in the county. Since this new activity is occurring within the 14 days post Halloween /Arkalah, some people are questioning if the increased activity is directly connected to those activities. The answer to that question is not definitive. There are many variables associated with illness spread. Social activity is one component as is school, work, and other communal events. During 2021 we have returned to a more normal routine and opted to not stay as individually isolated as compared to the same time period one year ago. ***The evidence currently supports that the spread of the virus is greatest in the population where the least amount of immunity exists (children and other non-immune people).***

### **LOCAL SCHOOLS:**

As previously mentioned, our local schools, especially at the elementary levels are the most currently affected by illness. It is expected that the current spread in the schools will continue for a period of at least six to eight weeks. The reasoning is simple. The grade school aged population, which was spared widespread illness last year, remains the largest group with no immunity to the illness either natural or induced by vaccination. Since the Delta variant has shown an equal ability to infect all age groups kids in classrooms are deemed to be at high risk for illness when exposed in the group setting (classrooms). Regardless of the safeguards in place children are always prime candidates for illness contraction and spread. In fact, this scenario is exactly how seasonal respiratory illnesses are spread in communities often spreading first in schools and then transferring to family households.

The health and safety of children in our community remains our highest priority. In order for children to be in school they must be healthy. Everyone remains in agreement that families want

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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.

Local school districts are continuing to work to minimize the spread of all illnesses especially COVID-19 by conducting screening and testing daily. 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.

### **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:**

The positivity rate for the last week was 7.05% which is up slightly from the 5.89% rate in the last week of October 2021 when we had a period of declining illness for more than 14 days.

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 June 1, 2021	Number of Cases	Percent of total
All cases	1862	100%
Vaccinated (break through)	185	10%
Non-Vaccinated	1677	90%

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

Month/Year	New Cases
June 2021	28
July 2021	<b>153</b>
August 2021	<b>488</b>
September 2021	<b>592</b>
October 2021	<b>386</b>
November 2021	<b>243</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1862</b>

COVID-19 Break through Cases	
June	4
July	25
August	50
September	45
October	38
November	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>185</b>

BT Cases by Age	
12-18	5
19-35	27
36-60	71
60+	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>

BT Cases by Vaccine	
Moderna	107
Pfizer	54
Janssen	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>

COVID-19 Cases in Cowley County Children by year: \*= to date of report

2020	Age 5-11	Age 0-18		2021	Age 5-11	Age 0-18
July	1	4		July	4	19
August	1	3		August	37	119
September	2	11		September	53	157
October	3	8		October	50	120
November	5	41		November*	54	135
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>67</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>550</b>

Comparison of Cowley County COVID-19 Delta:

Total Cases vs Pediatric Cases:

			Age 5-11	Age 0-18	% of total
July 2021	<b>153</b>	July	4	19	12.4
August 2021	<b>488</b>	August	37	119	24.4
September 2021	<b>592</b>	September	53	157	26.5
October 2021	<b>386</b>	October	50	120	31.0
November 2021	<b>243</b>	November*	54	135	<b>55.5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1831</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>30.0</b>

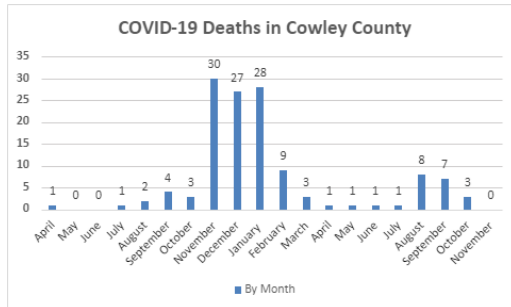
Cowley County has moved past the 50% fully vaccinated rate (50.5%) for all residents over 12 years of age based on data collected by the CDC. It is anticipated that the fully vaccinated numbers will climb for the overall population as families with children seek vaccination for children ages 5 through 12.

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Since the start of the pandemic, 5808 Cowley County residents have been confirmed as positive for COVID-19. No additional deaths have been reported thus far in November. This is joyful news compared to the same time period one year ago. One hundred twenty-seven (127) Cowley County residents have died from complications related to COVID-19 infection since March of 2020.

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> .

### **OTHER COVID-19 NEWS:**

**Booster doses:** In an unexpected turn of events the supply of Moderna booster doses to local health departments statewide was interrupted last week by a supply chain issue. That issue is now resolved but did result in the need to reschedule or delay booster dose administration for some residents.

The Pfizer mRNA vaccine in pediatric doses for children ages 5 to 12 is available and parents wishing to have their children vaccinated are encouraged to call to arrange appointments for children. All vaccines are available at both health department offices.

As the Public Health Officer, I highly endorse the use of vaccines to prevent and stop the spread of illness. I realize people have differing points of view on this matter. 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. I will respect and take into consideration the decisions of individuals.

Remember the emphasis of my position is to PREVENT illness and disease. The views that I hold are based in the data and other medical evidence available to me such as the overall rate of vaccination acceptance, COVID-19 illness rates compared over time, the overall infection and recovery rates in the Cowley County population, and current trends in illness which I monitor very closely.

I also take into consideration technical research and studies performed by independent medical institutions and medical schools, the results of which are published in peer reviewed medical and public health journals. I encourage everyone to take the time to dig deeply into the technical studies that look at all aspects of the effects of COVID-19, vaccination and other interventions. I urge you to not simply rely upon news articles that say something is wonderful or that something

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is terrible. There has been too much division based solely upon personal opinion during this pandemic and too little reasoned discussion.

Many people have asked me what my opinion is of alternative treatments against COVID-19 such as the use of drugs or antivirals to combat the virus like Ivermectin, hydroxychloroquine or other remedies. My answer is always the same. If I were facing impending death or long-term adverse effects from illness, I would want any and every possible remedy made available to me. I would want to have choices and good information available to allow me to make the best decision for my personal health. That does not mean I have any authority to procure or administer such medical options. If you want to explore the possibilities of using such medications, you must speak with your licensed physician who has the legal authority to prescribe medications to be used in approved situations. I encourage such conversations as they are evidence that people are asking professionals for health care advice.

The virus does not listen to news reports or follow social media, it does not discriminate and knows no political ideology. It continues to evolve and seek out hosts that are unprotected in order to spread. Current data continues to indicate a strong correlation between vaccination and your risk of infection from COVID-19. Infection risk is lower if you are vaccinated. I hope that you look at what is happening locally and base your decisions about your health, including vaccinations, on the facts.

### **ONE YEAR AGO:**

Not all the news this week is bad. One year ago, during the first 12 days of November 2020, 389 new COVID-19 cases were identified, and 5 Cowley County residents died from COVID-19 related illness.

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

Influenza season is upon us. The Health Department urges everyone to roll up the sleeve and take the flu vaccine to reduce the rate of illness in the County. Prevention is a top priority for us, and it seems likely that we will not be spared influenza cases this season as our personal activity levels are back to normal for most people.

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.

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- 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.

The next health update will be published Friday, November 19, 2021.  
Until then we hope you all remains healthy and safe!

Stay well.