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City-Cowley County  
Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 10, 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.

Respiratory illness in Cowley County remains widespread. There have been more than 200 new cases of COVID-19 reported during the first ten (10) days of December. Additionally, cases of influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) have also been confirmed in the County. The higher prevalence of respiratory illness in multiple forms means that everyone should be taking all the needed precautions to stop the spread of illness.

#### **LOCAL SCHOOLS:**

Local schools remain in session. Illness remains an issue, especially at the elementary levels. Respiratory illness can spread easily in classroom settings. The winter break that will begin near Christmas will provide separation in the county school age population and allow for recovery and hopefully result in lower infection rates when classes resume in January 2022.

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 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.

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## **COVID-19 TESTING:**

People who are planning to travel for the Christmas Holiday and are traveling by air need to check to see if any testing prior to travel is required (mainly for travel outside the United States). Recent changes to travel testing have been announced in which travelers must present a negative test result no more than one day old when traveling. Additionally, travelers that have been ill within a predetermined time prior to travel but have recovered may be required to provide attestation from a licensed health care provider or the local public health officer that will allow them the ability to travel. All of these new developments and requirements will take time to complete and people (travelers) who may be affected by these changes should not wait till the last minute to make arrangements for testing and any needed document preparation. If you are planning to travel by air, especially outside of the USA check now and find out what documentation that you may require and call the Health Department to make the appointments necessary to make your travel possible.

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 down slightly at 11.13% as compared to 15.89% last week.

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	2474	100%
Vaccinated (break through)	269	11%
Non-Vaccinated	2205	89%

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

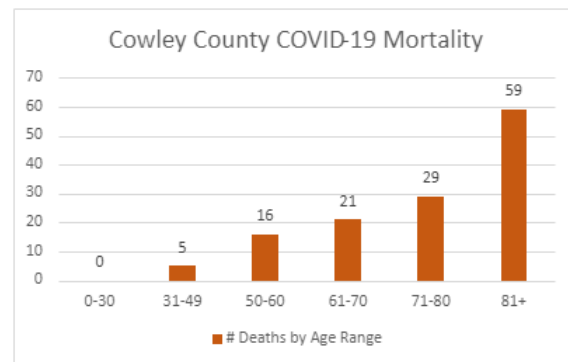
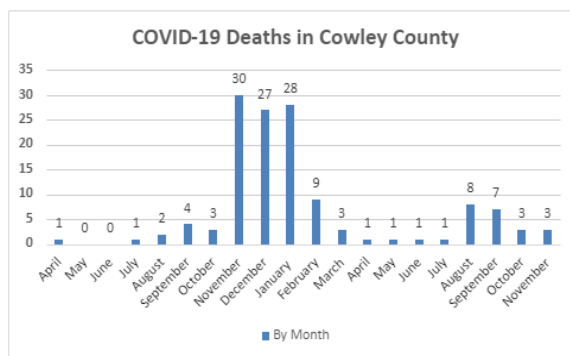
Month/Year	New Cases
June 2021	28
July 2021	<b>153</b>
August 2021	<b>488</b>
September 2021	<b>592</b>
October 2021	<b>386</b>
November 2021	<b>606</b>
December 2021	<b>221</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2474</b>

COVID-19 Break through Cases	
June	4
July	25
August	50
September	45
October	38
November	67
December	35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>269</b>

BT Cases by Age	
12-18	10
19-35	40
36-60	100
60+	119
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>

BT Cases by Vaccine	
Moderna	158
Pfizer	74
Janssen	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>

Since the start of the pandemic, 6,553 Cowley County residents have been confirmed as positive for COVID-19. Three people died during November 2021. One hundred thirty (130) 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> .

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

**Omicron Variant Update:** As of today, there have still been no discovered cases of the new variant of concern, Omicron, in Kansas. There have been confirmed cases in some surrounding states, indicating that it is only a matter of time until it arrives in Kansas. You will likely hear about this new variant every day via media outlets both local and national.

As was stated last week laboratory staff at KDHE tell us that we likely won't know for a few weeks (4 to 6) what the impact in Kansas will be. Any panic is counterproductive.

Nationally reports that connect Omicron to greater morbidity or mortality are still not available and as such the current local advice remains that we all should take steps preventative steps to avoid getting ill. Review of international data indicates that the rate of infection with Omicron is indeed much higher than any previous variation of SARS-CoV2. Since the reality of SARS-CoV2 is that it does quickly mutate, the key to slowing or stopping transmission rests in how the virus infects humans. Thus far the new variant is showing that it is still trying to infect our cells in the same fashion as before, it's simply becoming more efficient in that task. The end result is that immunity (both natural and acquired) will still help protect us from illness but the risk for infection will remain high because there are still a large number of available hosts in the population.

**Booster doses:** The FDA has approved booster vaccinations for all people over age 16 that were previously vaccinated. If you are interested in a boost dose of COVID-19 vaccine please contact the Health Department and we will provide that for you. New this week is the addition of providing additional boost doses to the population aged 16 – 17 that completed their primary doses at least six (6) months ago.

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 encourage the use of vaccines to prevent and stop the spread of illness. I realize people have differing points of view on this matter. I remain willing to discuss with anyone their concerns about vaccine safety and efficacy and explain the reasons I believe the COVID-19 vaccines are working. As always 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

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recovery rates in the Cowley County population, and current trends in illness which I monitor very closely. Everyone I speak with is tired of COVID-19 and I certainly understand that, however I read a remark from a researcher this week that resonated to me. Paraphrased it goes like this, “We are all exhausted, but the virus isn’t, and it won’t be until it no longer can find an unprotected host in which to further infect and spread.”

Evidence proves that the virus does not listen to news reports or follow social media, it does not discriminate and knows no political ideology. It is actively seeking hosts that are unprotected in order to spread. There is a proven correlation showing that vaccination will reduce your risk of infection from COVID-19.

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

Influenza is here! We are seeing several different respiratory illnesses in circulation concurrently in the population. The Health Department urges everyone to roll up your sleeve and take the flu vaccine to reduce the rate of illness in the County.

### **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 in the use of vitamins and supplements to aid in keeping you healthy please use them.

If you do become ill, please do not participate in any group events until after you have fully recovered from illness. Help yourself and your family and friends to remain healthy. 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 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, December 17, 2021.

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Stay well.