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City-Cowley County
Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 3, 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.

Illness spread was markedly higher in November 2021 mimicking the pattern established in November of 2020. Children were especially impacted during the month up to the Thanksgiving break, but during the past two weeks we have noticed a distinct change in which the majority of new infections are occurring in the population aged 35 and higher.

LOCAL SCHOOLS:

Local schools are back in session and while illness is still an issue, especially at the elementary levels, closing of schools has relented, hopefully it will remain that way through the next several weeks leading to Christmas and New Year. We are still seeing cases and reports of prolonged illness in families. Thankfully there have been no reports locally of hospitalizations of children due to COVID-19 to this point in time.

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:

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 15.89% which is up dramatically from the 7.3% rate 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	2312	100%
Vaccinated (break through)	240	10%
Non-Vaccinated	2072	90%

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

Month/Year	New Cases
June 2021	28
July 2021	153
August 2021	488
September 2021	592
October 2021	386
November 2021	606
December 2021	59
TOTAL	2312

COVID-19 Break through Cases	
June	4
July	25
August	50
September	45
October	38
November	67
December	6
TOTAL	240

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BT Cases by Age	
12-18	10
19-35	35
36-60	88
60+	107
Total	240

BT Cases by Vaccine	
Moderna	143
Pfizer	68
Janssen	29
Total	240

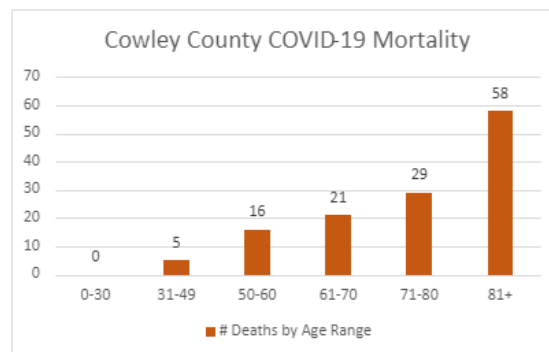
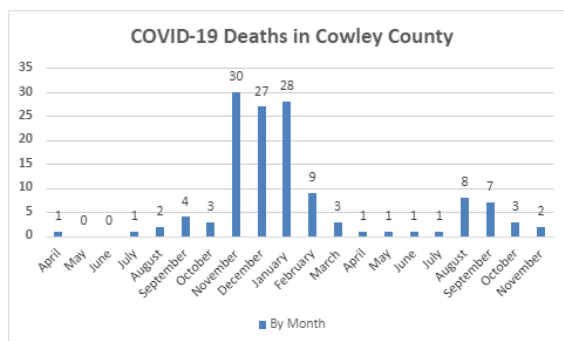
COVID-19 Cases in Cowley County Children by year: *= to date of report

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	8	50		November	129	312
TOTAL	15	76		TOTAL	273	727

Comparison of Cowley County COVID-19 Delta:
 Total Cases vs Pediatric Cases:

			Age 5-11	Age 0-18	% of total
July	2021	153	4	19	12.4
August	2021	488	37	119	24.4
September	2021	592	53	157	26.5
October	2021	386	50	120	31.0
November	2021	606	129	312	51.4
TOTAL		2225	246	657	29.5

Since the start of the pandemic, 6,391 Cowley County residents have been confirmed as positive for COVID-19. One additional death was reported last month a total of 2 people dies during November. One hundred twenty-nine (129) Cowley County residents have died from complications related to COVID-19 infection since March of 2020.



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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:

Oh Boy – Omicron! Unless everyone has been napping with Rip Van Winkle by now you have likely heard of a new COVID-19 variant of concern that has made itself visible. The Omicron Variant is reportedly replacing the Delta Variant as the leading cause of COVID-19 illness in some foreign countries and specifically South Africa. What does that mean for Cowley County? Actually, we do not know yet. It's not been found in Kansas thus far, but I am sure it will be before too long. As you are updated through the media about this new nemesis bear in mind that 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, therefore I feel the need to panic seems a bit overstated. International reports indicate that this variant may be more contagious as the DNA structure has changed, however it can still be detected through testing. Reports that connect it to greater morbidity or mortality are not available and as such the current local advice is basically that we remain on the lookout and that we all take steps to avoid getting ill.

Booster doses: The FDA has approved booster vaccinations for all people over age 18 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.

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.

At this point you are all aware that 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.

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Evidence is proving 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.

ONE YEAR AGO:

Not all the news is bad. One year ago, during November 2020, 986 new COVID-19 cases were identified, and 30 Cowley County residents died from COVID-19 related illness.

PERSONAL CARE AND ILLNESS PREVENTION:

Influenza season is upon us. 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. Prevention is a top priority for us and we do not want you to take ill and suffer needlessly.

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 are ill, please do not participate in any group events. 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 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, December 10, 2021.

Stay well.