

For my community message this week, I am using the latest release from the Alabama Hospital Association. You will see below, the numbers are going the wrong way and we are seeing that the vaccine can truly play a pivotal part in the spread of the virus and impacting those who are not vaccinated.

Remember, Spread the word, not the virus.

More than 900 COVID-19 patients are hospitalized in Alabama, the largest number since February, and too few Alabama residents are vaccinated. High vaccination coverage will reduce the spread of the virus and help prevent new variants from emerging.

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris said, "The slope of the increase is unprecedented. This upward trend is extremely concerning, especially with the Delta variant being highly infectious and much more transmissible than earlier strains. Getting vaccinated is the best action you can take to protect yourself and those around you."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided an update on the pandemic and issued the following recommendations Tuesday:

1. Getting vaccinated prevents severe illness, hospitalization, and death; it also helps reduce the spread of the virus in communities.

- Unvaccinated individuals should get vaccinated and continue masking until they are fully vaccinated.

- With the Delta variant, this is more urgent than ever. The highest spread of cases and severe outcomes is happening in places with low vaccination rates

2. Data show Delta is different than past versions of the virus: it is much more contagious.

- Some vaccinated people can get Delta in a breakthrough infection and may be contagious.

- Even so, vaccinated individuals represent a very small amount of transmission occurring around the country.

- Virtually

all hospitalizations and deaths continue to be among the unvaccinated.

3. In areas with substantial and high transmission, the CDC recommends that everyone (including fully vaccinated individuals) wear a mask in public indoor settings to help prevent spread of Delta and protect others.

4. CDC recommends that community leaders encourage vaccination and masking to prevent further outbreaks in areas of substantial and high transmission.

5. CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place.

Free COVID-19 vaccine is widely available in Alabama in 1,408 locations. Visit the Alabama Public Health Vaccination Portal at <https://www.alcovidvaccine.gov> to locate a clinic near you. For more information, go to <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19/index.html>

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