

The pandemic is not over.

In fact, experts say they fear residents in several states across the U.S., including Alabama, have helped the disease continue to spread by refusing to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

So, it has been a while since I wrote a community message, but I feel again compelled to address the growing number of new positive cases of COVID-19 within our state and our country. We are seeing a dramatic uptick in the number of people being tested and the number of positive cases being identified in our state and the surrounding states and articles leading with headlines like those above are the norm again.

You will no doubt remember my ramblings about Alabama being dead last in the % of persons vaccinated at just about 33%. Even Mississippi who we frequently make fun of, has a higher vaccination rate. But Alabama does rank in the top 5 in % of positivity rates, the highest percentage since February this year. The total number of cases in the US has doubled in the past 3 weeks and here in Alabama, experts are predicting a surge. Not the way we saw this virus going, particularly during the summer months. In Wednesday's report from the Alabama Department of Public Health, the 7-day average of new cases stood at 667 per day — more than five times the average of 121 daily new cases on July 5-6 and June 22. The 14-day average, which by design is less susceptible to sudden swings, is at 471 cases per day. That's almost triple the low of 163 recorded on July 5-6.

The causes of these increases cannot be precisely pinpointed, but three main factors are in play:

1. the rise of the more dangerous Delta variant of the virus
2. the higher number of people gathering in large groups without masks this summer
3. the low percentage of Alabamians who have been vaccinated.

Hospitalizations have also increased by about 30 percent. The sad news is, that of the increased admissions across the state and country, 96% of those admitted with Covid-19 have NOT TAKEN the vaccine. COVID -19 will continue to spread until vaccinations increase. Do your part, take the vaccine. If you or your loved one needs the vaccine, please contact your Healthcare provider, or contact us at Troy Regional Medical Center.

Spread the word, not the virus.

Rick E. Smith, FACHE
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