



# WASHINGTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2021

**Re: Local Public Health Advisory: Recent Rise in COVID-19 Activity**

Ongoing surveillance of local COVID-19 data by the Washington County Health Department (WCHD) indicates a continued elevation of hospitalizations and outbreaks.

Hospitalizations continue to increase, with currently 71 people hospitalized – 80% of which are unvaccinated.

Community outbreaks have risen throughout the community – 75 total since Nov. 1

**With individuals congregating indoors more during the winter months, WCHD strongly urges all community members who are not yet fully vaccinated to wear masks in indoor group settings and to get vaccinated and boosted if they are eligible.** COVID-19 vaccinations are available to anyone ages 5 and older, while boosters are available for anyone ages 16 and older. For more information or to make a COVID-19 vaccination appointment, please visit [WashCoVax.com](http://WashCoVax.com) or call 240-313-3456.

**Additionally, WCHD recommends that all community members, even those who are vaccinated, continue to take actions to protect themselves and prevent the spread of COVID-19, including:**

- Wearing [a well fitted mask](#) indoors among people who do not live with you
- Get all members of your family age 5 and older fully vaccinated, including boosters if eligible
- Avoiding large crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces where distancing is not possible
- [Washing your hands often](#) with soap and water or hand sanitizer
- Get tested if you have symptoms or may have been exposed
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick, or others if you are sick

“At this point we again are heading in the wrong direction and we all need to do our part to stop further spread of COVID-19,” said Earl Stoner, Washington County Health Officer. “Our hospitalizations are elevated significantly and we cannot continue to let the virus spread and impact those who are most vulnerable in our community, including younger children, older adults and immunocompromised individuals. We all need to remain vigilant to best protect ourselves, preserve healthcare capacity for everyone, and reduce the overall burden our community is experiencing. Now is the time for us all to recommit to working together to fight this disease. Simply put - I urge everyone to get vaccinated or boosted when you are eligible, wear a mask in indoor public settings, and to get tested and stay home if you are sick.”

**Community members showing any sign or symptom of COVID-19 should get tested, regardless of vaccination status or prior infection.** Asymptomatic persons exposed to COVID-19 should also get tested, regardless of vaccination status. For more information on testing locations and hours please visit <https://www.washco-md.net/coronavirus-info/>.

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