



Shawnee County Health Department

Shawnee County Health Department
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MEDIA RELEASE

Updated COVID-19 Recommendations from Local Health Officer

Topeka, Kan. – Shawnee County Health Officer, Dr. Erin Locke, has issued updated recommendations to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the Shawnee County community. These updated recommendations continue to be in accordance with recommendations from both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the State of Kansas. Recommendations continue to focus on the primary mitigation measures that have been shown to have the greatest impact on reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Updates to the COVID-19 Recommendations from the Local Health Officer include updates to definitions, an added section regarding COVID-19 vaccines and updated links for Industry-Specific guidelines.

Shawnee County has seen increasing cases, percent positivity and hospitalizations over the last several weeks. The vast majority of cases and hospitalizations in Shawnee County continue to be in unvaccinated individuals. A smaller number are in individuals who are eligible for a booster dose but have not yet received it, particularly in older adults and those with high risk medical conditions. Vaccination to COVID-19 is the leading strategy for protecting the health of the community and ending the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccination remains highly protective against severe symptomatic disease from COVID-19, including hospitalization and death.

At this time, individuals aged 5 and older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination and individuals aged 16 and older are eligible for a booster dose. Currently, 57% of the population in Shawnee County is fully vaccinated and 65% has received at least one vaccine dose. Bi-weekly updates regarding the status of Shawnee County's vaccination efforts can be found on the SCHED Vaccine Webpage [here](#). The SCHED continues to strongly encourage residents to protect themselves by getting a COVID-19 vaccine and subsequent booster dose once they are eligible. Many opportunities to receive a COVID-19 vaccine continue to exist in our community and can be found easily through the [CDC's Vaccine tool](#).

Early identification and treatment for COVID-19 remains essential. The SCHED strongly encourages immediate testing with the development of any COVID-19 symptoms or after contact with a confirmed positive case. Individuals at high risk for severe disease should discuss early outpatient treatment of COVID-19 with their healthcare provider. Testing continues to be available and free to Shawnee County residents. To find a location near you, visit www.knowbeforeyougok.com or contact your healthcare provider.



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Face masks also continue to be an effective strategy at reducing the risk of COVID-19. Individuals unable to achieve physical distancing, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a face mask in indoor public spaces and when interacting in indoor private spaces with unvaccinated individuals from other households. A face mask should also be worn by individuals, regardless of vaccination status, in very crowded outdoor settings where consistent physical distancing is difficult to maintain.

Questions regarding the Health Officer Recommendations can be sent to HAAdmin@snco.us or by calling **785.251.4949**. Questions regarding COVID-19 vaccine can be sent to CovidVaccine@snco.us.

Attachment:

COVID-19 Recommendations from the Local Health Officer (12/16/2021)

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Shawnee County Health Department is committed to working in partnership with our community to promote and protect the optimal health of all people by bridging gaps to eliminate health inequities, respecting the diversity of our community, through adaptive and innovative processes.

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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COVID-19 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER

Local health officer recommendations issued on this 16th day of December 2021 to mitigate the spread of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) in Shawnee County, Kansas.

On the 31st day of January 2020 the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services declared a national public health emergency from Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). In recognition of the continued consequences of the pandemic, this national public health emergency remains in effect.

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. This virus continues to mutate into variants which spread easily from person to person and may result in serious illness or death. In the United States two variants, Delta and Omicron, are considered Variants of Concern.

The Delta variant was first identified in Shawnee County in June 2021. It spread very quickly through the community and led to a rapid surge in cases and hospitalizations, which peaked in September 2021. Through the fall season it continued to circulate at high levels.

Now, Shawnee County is again experiencing a rapid surge in COVID-19 cases from the Delta variant. This may have been caused, in part, by the gatherings and travel associated with the Thanksgiving holiday. However, the increase was much more than expected, even accounting for the holiday.

The Omicron variant has not yet been detected in Shawnee County. This new variant has only recently emerged, and it remains too early to predict the full impact it will have on the community. However, Omicron does appear to be more contagious than Delta, and it is expected to replace Delta as the dominant variant in the community, likely leading to a future surge in cases.

Thus far, COVID-19 has resulted in 29,217 reported positive cases and 489 deaths of Shawnee County residents. The majority of new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths are occurring in unvaccinated individuals.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to endanger the life, health, safety and welfare of persons and property within the border of Shawnee County, Kansas. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Shawnee County Local Health Officer, all recommend continuation of community mitigation strategies to contain the spread of the virus.

DEFINITIONS

Face mask: A covering over the nose and mouth which fits snugly against the sides of the face without gaps. May be a cloth mask made of washable, breathable fabric or a disposable surgical mask.

Physical distancing: At least six (6) feet of distance between yourself and others outside your household, except for infrequent or incidental moments of closer proximity.

Fully vaccinated: ≥ 2 weeks following completion of a primary COVID-19 series. The primary series of Pfizer and Moderna is two doses. The primary series of Janssen (J&J) is one dose.

Additional primary vaccine dose: An additional vaccine dose *added to* the primary COVID-19 series for certain moderately or severely immunocompromised individuals. Currently recommended for Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and referred to as the “3rd dose.” It is administered 28 days after the second dose.

Vaccine booster: An additional dose of vaccine *given after* the primary COVID-19 series. Recommended 6 months after the completion of a Pfizer or Moderna series *or* 2 months after the Janssen (J&J) primary dose.

Unvaccinated: Not having received a vaccine dose or < 2 weeks following completion of a primary COVID-19 series.

COVID-19 VACCINE

Vaccination to COVID-19 is the leading strategy for protecting the health of the community and ending the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccination remains highly protective against severe symptomatic disease from the Delta variant, including hospitalization and death.

At this time, individuals aged 5 and older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. Currently, 57% of the population in Shawnee County is fully vaccinated and 65% has received at least one vaccine dose.

UNVACCINATED

All eligible individuals who are not yet vaccinated should receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible.

FULLY VACCINATED

All fully vaccinated individuals who are 6 months or more since completion of a Pfizer or Moderna primary series should receive a vaccine booster as soon as possible, if eligible by age.

All fully vaccinated individuals who are 2 months or more from the Janssen (J&J) primary dose should receive a vaccine booster as soon as possible.

IMMUNOCOMPROMISED

Individuals who are moderately or severely immunocompromised and have completed the 2-dose Pfizer or Moderna primary series should receive an additional primary vaccine dose after 28 days.

FACE MASKS

INDOOR SPACES

All individuals unable to achieve physical distancing, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a face mask in public spaces *and* when interacting in private spaces with unvaccinated individuals from other households.

OUTDOOR SPACES

In most outdoor spaces, individuals do not need to wear a face mask. However, a face mask should be worn by all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, in very crowded settings where consistent physical distancing is difficult to maintain.

TRANSPORTATION

When using public transportation, taxis or ride-sharing services, a face mask should be worn at all times.

PERSONS EXEMPT

A face mask should not be required for the following individuals:

- Children under the age of 10 years old. Children aged 2 and under should not wear a face mask because of the risk of suffocation. It is recommended that children aged over 2 and under 10 wear a face mask with the assistance and close supervision of an adult.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face mask, including but not limited to persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face mask could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
- Persons for whom wearing a face mask would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- Persons obtaining a service that requires temporary removal of the face mask for security surveillance, screening or a need for specific access to the face.
- Persons who are engaged in an activity that a professional association or regulatory entity has determined should not be conducted while wearing a face mask.
- Persons communicating with others who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Persons who are engaged in any lawful activity during which wearing a face mask is prohibited by law.
- Persons driving alone or solely with other members of the same household.
- Persons swimming in a pool, lake or other body of water.
- Persons engaged in strenuous physical activity.
- Persons eating or drinking.
- Persons speaking or presenting to an audience or congregation if more than 10 feet distance can be achieved

OTHER MITIGATION STRATEGIES

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Particularly for indoor gatherings, adjust the size of the event so that individuals from different households are able to consistently maintain 6 feet of physical distance.
- If adequate physical distance cannot be successfully achieved, small groupings of no more than 10 individuals should be maintained. This will limit potential spread to the entire event.

TESTING

- Monitor for symptoms and test immediately if symptoms develop.
- If you have been exposed, test 3-5 days after exposure, regardless of symptoms or vaccination status.
- Test before joining indoor gatherings with others who are not in your household.
- If positive on a test, immediately isolate and notify your close contacts of their exposure.

VENTILATION

- Hold events outdoors or open doors/windows to permit air circulation, weather permitting.
- Ensure the HVAC system is maintained, regularly change filters and circulate air with fans.

HYGIENE

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Clean high-touch surfaces regularly.

INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC

Industry-specific guidance and recommendations can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/workplaces-businesses/index.html>. Following any additional best practice guidance from each business sector is strongly encouraged. More information is available at: <https://www.snco.us/HD/coronavirus.asp>



Erin Locke, MD, MPH
Shawnee County Health Officer