



Officials ask Delawareans to get vaccinated as COVID-19 cases rise

Concerned about the surge in positive COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, Governor John Carney asked Delawareans to get fully vaccinated during his Dec. 7 live-streamed briefing. Almost 62 percent of eligible Delawareans are fully vaccinated, he said.

Delaware's seven-day average of new positive COVID-19 cases was 572.7 on Dec. 6, 2021, compared to 396.7 on Sept. 2, 2021. New positive cases especially increased since Thanksgiving. Division of Public Health (DPH) Director Dr. Karyl Rattay said unvaccinated people are fueling the rise.

COVID-19 hospitalizations rose from 23 on July 4, 2021 to 296 (with 34 critical) on Dec. 6, 2021. Delaware Emergency Management Agency Director A.J. Schall said increased hospitalizations stress hospitals that are experiencing high-turnover.

The Delta variant is contributing to the surge, Dr. Rattay noted. While Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey have reported cases of the new Omicron variant, Delaware had no Omicron cases as of Dec. 6, 2021, Dr. Rattay said.

"The virus finds a foothold in unvaccinated populations," Dr. Rattay said. "Getting vaccinated will prevent future mutations on this virus."

Governor Carney strongly advises everyone 2 years old and older to wear a mask indoors regardless of vaccination status. He urges Delawareans to get their booster shots and the partially vaccinated to get their missing dose.

For more information, visit de.gov/boosters and de.gov/getmyvaccine.



Stay safe this holiday season

Follow these recommendations from the Division of Public Health (DPH) to stay healthy this holiday season:

- All eligible people should complete the COVID-19 vaccination series, including getting booster doses. Seek vaccine from pharmacies, health care providers, Federally Qualified Health Centers (for patients), and standing DPH vaccine sites. For a list of sites, visit de.gov/getmyvaccine.
- Wear a face mask in public indoor settings (when gift and grocery shopping and attending holiday gatherings and events) and where masks are required, such as in schools and public buildings and on public transportation. Children younger than 2 years old should not wear face masks.
- Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated spaces. Gather outdoors when possible, such as for a family walk.
- Socially distance from others, following the six-foot rule.
- Wash hands regularly with warm soap and water.
- Get a COVID-19 test one to two days before gathering. Inbound air travelers to the U.S. are required to test within one day of departure.
- Stay home if you test positive or are sick. Call out instead.



Visit DPH's holiday recommendations webpage at: de.gov/holidays.

Children deserve vaccination protection

Division of Public Health Director Dr. Karyl Rattay urges parents and guardians to have their children ages 5 to 11 receive the Pfizer-BioNTech pediatric dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Partially vaccinated children should receive their second doses.

Since June, about 14,000 COVID-19 cases have occurred among Delaware children ages birth to 17, Dr. Rattay said, adding that Delaware has one of the lower U.S. vaccination rates for children 5 to 11.

Approximately five million children ages 5 to 11 have received at least one dose of the vaccine to date, and no severe vaccine-related side effects have been found.

Since mid-October 2021, U.S. children ages 5 to 11 years have experienced more than 8,300 COVID-related hospitalizations, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In the United States, COVID-19 has caused nearly 100 U.S. deaths among children ages 5 to 11, leading to its rank as one of the top 10 causes of death for children ages 5 to 11.

Children can have short-term and long-term health complications from COVID-19.

Find vaccine locations for ages 5-11 at <https://coronavirus.delaware.gov/vaccine-information-for-ages-5-11/>.



John Robinson (left) and Anne Carr of the Division of Public Health Office of Health Crisis Response train a group of Bancroft Construction workers on the use of Narcan on Nov. 18 in Newark. Narcan is a medication that can reverse the effects of opioids in an overdose situation to potentially save a life. DPH has partnered with the construction industry to provide substance use disorder resources and training for workers. Photo by Jamaladeen Brady.

DPH and Bancroft partner to provide training to reduce overdose deaths

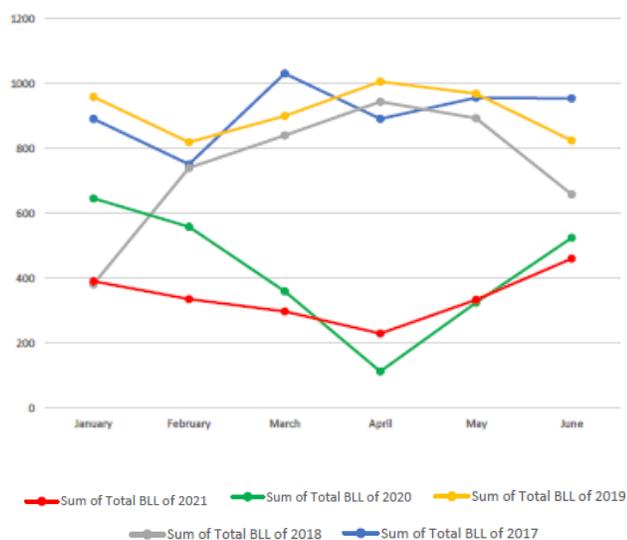
The Division of Public Health's (DPH) *Drug Overdose Mortality Surveillance Report* identified workers in the construction and installation, maintenance, and repair industries as being at high risk of experiencing a drug overdose. In response, the DPH Office of Health Crisis Response has partnered with Bancroft Construction to provide training about overdose, the stigma associated with addiction, and Narcan administration to over 20 Bancroft Construction supervisors.

A Nov. 18 Narcan distribution event at the University of Delaware FinTech job site was the first time DPH was able to give the overdose-reversing medication Narcan directly to workers who are at risk of overdose or who may find themselves in a life-saving position to help others.

In Delaware, Narcan is available at most pharmacies without a prescription. Individuals can also visit www.HelpsHereDe.com to receive overdose training and Narcan through the mail, or they can visit one of the Department of Health and Social Services' [Bridge Clinics](#) to get a free Narcan kit.

Those struggling with substance use disorder and in crisis should call 1-833-9-HOPEDE (1-833-946-7333) to speak to trained crisis professionals about treatment and recovery services available in Delaware and other states.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Blood Lead Levels (BLL) Testing, Children Under 6 Years, Delaware, January-June, 2017-2021



Source: Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, Division of Public Health, Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, September 2021. For more information, read the DHSS press release at <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/newsroom.html>.



Maintain positive connections and reduce unnecessary stress this winter

When gathering with family and friends is not possible, stay connected with these activities:

- Hold group chats online or on the phone.
- Take a virtual museum or zoo tour together.
- Record and send video messages.
- Create digital postcards or digital photo albums.
- Play games while facetimeing or online interactive games like Scrabble Go.
- Send care packages, cards, or letters.
- Host an online event to watch a movie, paint a picture, tell stories, or read books.

To relieve any stress or tension, try these things:

- Pause and identify your triggers or stress points. Develop a self-care or time-out plan to remove yourself from stressful situations.
- Practice mindfulness.
- Eat healthy, exercise, get plenty of sleep, and take a break if you feel stressed. Do not overeat.
- Take a break from the news and social media.
- Balance your time; do not overcommit yourself.
- Express gratitude for the good in your life.
- Help others (<https://volunteer.delaware.gov/>).
- Have a stress buddy to vent to or call for help.
- Work through potential conflicts by talking to your partner, friend, or family member.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol.

For more tips about coping with stress, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/publichealthissue/copingwith-stresstips.html>.

Individuals in relationships that negatively impact their health and safety should plan discreet ways to signal if they are in crisis, or if it is unsafe to talk. The Victim Rights Task Force provides a listing of counseling, information, and support services at: <https://www.delawarevictimservices.org/resources.html>. The Delaware State Police Crime Victims Center provides help and advice at 1-800-VICTIM-1 (1-800-842-8461).

DPH's Health System Protection Section works to ensure retail food safety

Everyone enjoys a meal out from time to time, whether it is picking up a rotisserie chicken at your local grocery store, grabbing some tacos from a food truck, or taking the kids out for pizza.

The Division of Public Health's Health System Protection Section (HSP) works to ensure that food offered by retail food establishments is safe. Food sources must be approved. According to the 2017 Food and Drug Administration Food Code, "approved" means acceptable to the regulatory authority based on determination of conformity with principles, practices, and generally recognized standards that protect public health."

The first step to becoming an approved or permitted food establishment is to submit a complete plan review application packet to DPH's Office of Food Protection. An Approval to Construct letter is issued to the proposed food establishment after the application is reviewed and approved. Next, an inspector conducts a preoperational inspection. If no problems or violations exist, the inspector certifies that food is being safely handled, stored, and served by leaving an inspection report which serves as the interim permit to operate. The food establishment receives its annual permit after paying the permit fee.

"Health Systems Protection Community Environmental Health Services does an outstanding job of protecting all Delawareans from foodborne illness," said HSP Section Chief Jamie Mack. "From our Office of Food Protection to our inspectors and administrative staff, we rely heavily upon their knowledge and expertise to work with the food industry to provide safe products."



Division of Public Health
Environmental Health Specialist II
Charity Howard checks food
temperatures. DPH photo.