

Our Vision: Healthy People in Healthy Communities
Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties

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COVID-19 cases at very high levels in South Heartland District

Hastings, Neb – COVID-19 cases continue to rise in the four-county health district toward levels not seen since the omicron surge in January-February 2022, according to South Heartland District Health Department (SHDHD) executive director Michele Bever. In the health department’s COVID update on July 19, Bever reported that COVID-19 in the health district is at very high levels, based on the case rate and percent positive tests. The health district is comprised of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties. Bever said new cases are being logged in all four counties.

Bever reported that testing last week had increased 15% over the previous week, keeping in mind that the count of tests does not include at home testing. She said the percent positive tests and 7-day cases per 100,000, neither of which include at home tests, are undercounts of actual COVID-19 activity in the community. Even so, transmission is now higher than it has been since the high rates in January/February 2022.

Weekly community positivity was 41.4% and 42.1% for the weeks ending July 16 and July 9, respectively. Positivity of 10% or more is considered high transmission, so this is 4 times higher than “high” threshold. The 7-day case rate was 188 per 100K on July 19 (100 or more cases per 100K in 7 days is considered high transmission). The district has been above 100 cases per 100k since July 6. Bever said all four South Heartland counties are experiencing very high transmission.

Bever also indicated cases are affecting more long-term care facilities. In the past two weeks, six facilities reported cases, including 3 residents and 16 staff who tested positive. The district’s hospitals are continuing to see a small number of patients admitted due to COVID-19 complications – currently 2 patients were hospitalized on Tuesday, July 19 and ICU bed availability was 36.4%. In the month of June, 100% of hospitalized COVID patients were not up to date on their COVID vaccinations.

“With more people testing positive, we are seeing renewed interest in how to properly isolate if you test positive, and what to do if you have been exposed,” Bever said. “Our website has the most current guidance and instructions, including definitions of isolation and quarantine, how many days for each depending on whether or not you are up to date on your vaccinations, and information on when isolation or quarantine may be ended.” The quarantine and isolation instructions with infographics can be found in English and in Spanish at southheartlandhealth.org.

With ongoing high community transmission, the health department is encouraging all residents who are eligible to stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines and boosters. “COVID vaccines are available in the health district for ages 6 months and older. We encourage everyone who is eligible for the vaccine to take steps to stay up to date, which means getting the primary series and any boosters as soon as you are eligible,” Bever said. “What we are seeing is that people who are up to date on their vaccines and become infected typically have only mild symptoms, similar to colds or allergies,” Bever said. “This means the vaccine is doing a good job boosting people’s immune systems and protecting them from getting very ill,” she said.

For locations offering COVID-19 vaccine or COVID-19 tests, refer to the SHDHD website, southheartlandhealth.org or call the health department office, 1-877-238-7595. For additional information about COVID-19 vaccines for children, see the interview with local pediatrician Dr. Daniel Leonard at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3aFODWNV-Q>. For weekly state, national and global COVID-19 updates, visit the UNMC Global Center for Health Security: <https://www.unmc.edu/healthsecurity/covid-19/biweekly-updates.html>.

SHDHD COVID-19 dashboard update on 07.19.2022: 80 confirmed COVID-19 cases logged last week compared to 56 the week before; 33 confirmed cases counted in the current week through Tuesday. Cumulative case total for the health district is 10,761 since March 2020. Other South Heartland District COVID-19 trends may be found on [SHDHD's COVID-19 dashboard](#) at southheartlandhealth.org.

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