




MEMORANDUM

Date: December 1, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
County Administrator

Re: **Public Health Advisory Update - Respiratory Viral Infections**

Given the current rise of viral respiratory illness impacting Pima County and many other parts of Arizona, the Health Department will be releasing a Public Health Advisory updating current information and prevention guidance regarding what has been labeled in the press as the "triple-demic"— COVID-19, Influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). (Attachment)

For the first time since late February, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 Community Level for Pima County has moved to HIGH (orange) in the last week. Additionally, since October 1, 2022, RSV cases have increased steadily as in the rest of the nation and are now eight times higher in Pima County than the five-year average. This is further compounded by Influenza which is climbing steadily in our community.

JKL/dym

Attachment

c: Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator and Chief Medical Officer
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Public Health Director, Health Department



Public Health Advisory
Update on Respiratory Infections
2022-2
December 1, 2022

This Public Health Advisory reports on the increased transmission of respiratory viral diseases, including COVID-19, within Pima County. The reported [Arizona state-wide pediatric bed utilization of 98%](#) suggests that there is already limited access for children requiring inpatient hospital care. This Advisory includes the latest recommendations to mitigate the impact of respiratory viral infections in Pima County at this time.

COVID-19

- Pima County is currently in a state of high transmission, with 234 cases/100K as of Nov. 25, 2022.
- Adult hospital and ICU bed availability has decreased over the past two weeks as the cases have increased.
- Across all age groups, COVID-19 unvaccinated individuals have a greater risk of hospitalization and death compared to individuals who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccine.
(<https://www.azdhs.gov/covid19/documents/data/rates-of-cov-19-by-vaccination.pdf?v=20220105>)

COVID-19 Impact Metrics

- The CDC releases COVID-19 Community Level metrics weekly at: [COVID-19 by County | CDC](#)
- CDC Community Level is based on three metrics that together are used to determine COVID-19 community risk level (classified as High, Medium or Low). These metrics are:
 - New COVID-19 cases per 100K people in the past seven days (with cases being classified as fewer or greater than 200/100K in last seven days)
 - New COVID-19 admissions per 100K total (7-day total)
 - Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)
- The Health Department progress report is consistent with these metrics at <https://webcms.pima.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=568644>

Influenza (flu)

- As of Nov. 28, flu cases were rising and cases were seven times higher compared to the past five years. The Health Department recommends getting a flu shot and following mitigation measures that mirror those for COVID-19.
- Antiviral treatment is available from your health care provider and works best if started within 1-2 days after symptoms begin.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

- RSV cases have been increasing steadily in Pima County with nearly eight times as many cases reported since Oct. 1, 2022, compared to the five-year average ([ADHS Flu/RSV reports](#)).
- There is no vaccine for RSV.
- Follow mitigation measures that mirror those for COVID-19.
- Seek medical care for young children and adults who are immunocompromised if experiencing difficulties such as breathing fast, bluish lips or face, high fever or dehydration (dry diapers).

Mitigation Measures for all Community Members

- The Health Department **strongly recommends** the following mitigation measures be observed by all residents and visitors in Pima County at the current time:
 - Get vaccinated for flu and COVID-19, and if already vaccinated for COVID-19, get boosted.
 - If you are at high risk of getting very sick, consider avoiding non-essential indoor activities in public.
 - Stay home when sick with a fever, cough, or other symptoms and test promptly for COVID-19. (If you test positive you may also be eligible for treatment: www.pima.gov/covid19treatment.)

- Wear a mask that provides you with the [best protection](#) when in public indoor spaces.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or fabric, or into your sleeve or elbow (not into hands).
- Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.

Vaccination

- As of Nov. 23, 2022, 74.2% of the population of Pima County had completed their primary series for COVID-19. Among those 65 and older, 95% had completed their primary series.
- PCHD **strongly recommends** that anyone 6 months or older receive the primary COVID-19 vaccination series, and the bivalent booster if age-eligible. Boosters are available to anyone 5 and older if it has been two months since completing the primary series or receiving the original monovalent booster. Further information on vaccine availability is at www.pima.gov/covid19vaccine.
- Across all age groups, unvaccinated individuals had a greater risk of hospitalization from COVID-19 and a greater risk of dying from COVID-19 than people who were not up to date with their COVID-19 vaccine. See ADHS report, updated Nov. 2, 2022, here: <https://www.azdhs.gov/covid19/documents/data/rates-of-cov-19-by-vaccination.pdf?v=20220105>
- Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are widely available across the community at commercial pharmacies, as well as the Abrams Public Health Center, and the three Health Department clinics.

COVID-19 Testing availability

- The County is offering free rapid antigen testing at the Abrams Public Health Center, 3950 S. County Club Rd., through December.
- Free at-home test kits are also available at Pima County Public Libraries, three Health Department clinics, and at various community events. Locations/hours: pima.gov/covid19testing.
- Free testing is still abundantly available from commercial pharmacies, federally qualified health centers and other medical providers. Find sites at covid.gov/tests

COVID-19 Antiviral Therapeutics

- Individuals at high risk (including age) or with certain medical conditions should consider antiviral therapeutics if they receive a positive COVID-19 test or meet criteria for preventive treatment. The CDC lists risk factors on this page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>
- Medical evaluation for free COVID-19 oral treatment is available from the Health Department. Call 520-724-7895 to potentially qualify for a prescription. More information is at www.pima.gov/covid19treatment.

School and Childcare Settings

- Schools and school districts are responsible for determining mitigation policy for their learning environments.
- The CDC recommends when COVID-19 community levels are high, schools and childcare settings should consider adding [mitigation strategies](#) to maintain safe, in-person learning and keep childcare settings safely open. These strategies also provide protection against other respiratory infections.

Pima County Health Director Dr. Theresa Cullen:

“Pima County has a robust response to the spike in respiratory viral illness. The County continues to make free COVID-19 testing, vaccination and treatment available to everyone. Our health clinics offer no-cost flu shots. We coordinate with hospitals and health care providers to ensure the best possible level of care for our sickest community members. Through community outreach and mobile events, our commitment to providing equitable access to services across our diverse community is unwavering.”