



Public Health Advisory Update COVID-19 2021-04

Updated March 26, 2021

This is a rapidly evolving situation. Information will be when critical new information and recommendations are needed.

The Pima County Health Department (PCHD) is committed to ensuring that in 2021 our community is able to resume enjoying the variety of activities previously experienced before the pandemic. This update to the March 5, 2021, Public Health Advisory provides the current status of the pandemic in Pima County including vaccination efforts, documents changes to our current disease situation, and provides recommendations to reduce the impact of COVID-19. The Department will continue to provide Public Health Advisory Updates that are informed by an analysis of increasing data and knowledge about COVID-19.

What we Know

COVID-19 is highly contagious and spreads primarily through person-to-person contact. Significant community and individual adherence to mitigation recommendations has been demonstrated to decrease illness and death. Starting in late November 2020, PCHD identified an accelerated transmission of COVID-19 throughout Pima County that lasted until February 2021. Pima County continues to see a decline in our case rate, with approximately 2,510 cases reported from March 1- March 24, 2021. This compares to 7,863 cases reported during the month of February 2021.

There have been over 110,000 COVID-19 cases diagnosed in Pima County as of March 24, 2021. Over 2,300 deaths have been attributed to COVID-19, an increase of 111 in March 2021. Over ***one out of every 450 residents of Pima County has died due to COVID-19***. As the number of infections as well as serious illness declines, increased availability of clinical services, hospital beds and timely epidemiological response continues to occur within Pima County.

COVID-19 Response Updates

Vaccination

- As of March 24, 2021, over 417,000 COVID-19 vaccines have been given in Pima County through sites at Banner – University Medicine North, Banner – South Kino Stadium, Tucson Convention Center, Tucson Medical Center, as well as additional health care partners (far surpassing our goal of 300,000 immunizations by March 31, 2021). The University of Arizona has transitioned to become an Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) distribution site, and their vaccination numbers are now reported separate from the county delivered vaccines. Further information is available at: www.pima.gov/covid19vaccine
- PCHD is committed to delivering vaccine to rural areas and mobile points of distribution serving vulnerable populations. Beginning Feb. 1, 2021, a minimum of 10 percent of the County's vaccine is being allocated to mobile clinics designed to increased access to vulnerable populations.
- Effective March 25, 2021 eligibility for vaccination includes any of the following:
 - Anyone 55 or older
 - Anyone (16 or older) with a high risk medical condition or disability below (list) OR experiencing homelessness OR living in a congregate setting OR receiving in-home or long-term care
 - Any essential worker. This includes first responders, corrections officers, educators and support staff, child care workers, food and agricultural workers, U.S. Postal Service workers, manufacturing workers, grocery store workers, and public transit workers.

Therapeutics

- Monoclonal Antibodies (mABs) are available in Pima County at multiple hospital-based locations. Use of mABs within five days of diagnosis for appropriate patients has the potential to significantly reduce hospitalization and mortality. Providers and patients are encouraged to consider the use of mABs as a therapeutic intervention when appropriate. Recent best practice requires the administration of two medications together. More information is available www.pima.gov/covid19mab and <https://www.covid19treatmentguidelines.nih.gov/statement-on-bamlanivimab-plus-etesevimab-eua/>.

COVID-19 Mitigation Measures

- **Face Coverings** – The Health Department requests that face coverings be worn at all times when in public or when less than 6 feet from individuals not in the same household.
 - Face coverings must be worn indoors or when required by local governments, businesses, schools, health care facilities, or other entities that serve the public and physically operate in the Pima County.
 - In keeping with Board Policy C 2.9 - Temporary Policy Novel Corona Virus, all employees and visitors to Pima County facilities are required to wear face masks and maintain physical distancing. Adherence to mask use and other mitigation measures is required in all Pima County parks, facilities, buildings and properties (inclusive of leased properties and the Fairgrounds), and will continue to be enforced until further notice.
- **Maintenance of Mitigation Measures** – When outside their place of residence, PCHD requests that all should comply with the following recommendations to the maximum extent possible:
 - Maintain 6 feet of distance between individuals who are not part of their household;
 - Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer;
 - Avoid contact with anyone when sick with a fever, cough, or other COVID-19 symptoms.
 - Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or fabric or, if not possible, into their sleeve or elbow (but not into hands).
- **Gatherings** – The Health Department continues to request that gatherings should be held outdoors wherever possible. PCHD requests that outdoor gatherings be limited to 200 people and only occur in settings and venues where social distancing is possible. Likewise, indoor events may occur when appropriate mitigation is in place and when these occur in spaces that provide a minimum of 150 square feet per person.
- **Mandatory reporting of confirmed and suspected cases of COVID-19 cases continues to be a requirement of schools, businesses, and government entities** – Schools, businesses and governmental entities must require employees or students to report if they test positive for COVID-19 and were present in the workplace or school within the 48 hours prior to onset of symptoms or within 48 hours of the date on which they were tested. Entities should instruct employees, staff or students to follow isolation and quarantine protocols specified by the County, and exclude positive cases and close contacts from the school or workplace during the isolation or quarantine periods. This information is used to provide evaluation and mitigation support to the reporting organization.

School and Childcare Settings

- School partners should review [Executive Order 2021-04](#), signed by the Governor on March 3, 2021, regarding in-person learning in the state of Arizona.
- PCHD adopted the CDC guidance at the beginning of February 2021 and continues to support schools and districts in implementing strong layered mitigation strategies as a part of their return to learning.
- Executive Order 2020-51 requires schools to develop and implement a policy to require use of masks for all staff and students aged 5 years and older. ADHS Emergency Measure 2020-04 supports this executive order and requires all district and charter schools to mandate that masks are worn on school campuses and during school activities.
- Indoor athletic events pose an increased risk of transmission. Outdoor sports may take place and should follow strict mitigation guidelines.

Businesses and Public Spaces

- Business entities should follow state, County, and industry-specific guidance related to COVID-19 mitigation.
- PCHD requests that businesses require employees and customers to wear masks in public spaces, and ensure that work or service environment permit physical distancing of 6 feet between employees and/or the public.
- Retailers are encouraged to continue provide curbside service or designate hours of operation for specific at-risk populations including those over 65 and those who are immune-compromised.

- Restaurants and other food service facilities are encouraged provide for 6 feet of spacing between parties, require mask use when not consuming food or beverage, maximize the use of outdoor dining opportunities, and continue takeout, delivery and curbside pickup.
- PCHD requests that gyms, fitness and dance studios limit capacity when operating indoors and require participant use of face coverings at all times, and physical distance of at least six feet between attendees. Refer to the AZDHS guidance available at [indoor-gyms-fitness-centers.pdf \(azdhs.gov\)](https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/prevention-and-control/indoor-gyms-fitness-centers.pdf).

Sports

PCHD has developed guidance that will assist in re-opening of sports facilities with appropriate COVID-19 guidance. The best practice recommendations from PCHD include:

- Spectator limit of 200 individuals per outdoor field/use area at the current time with expected increase consistent with ongoing decrease in COVID-19 cases in the county
- Required face coverings by coaches, officials and spectators, and wearing of masks by players when not involved in active play
- Limiting seating to areas where spectators can keep six (6) feet spacing between separate parties;
- Posting of COVID-19 advisory signage
- Designating event staff or volunteers to monitor and enforce adherence to mitigation measures
- These requirements apply to all Pima County owned facilities. Event specific mitigation plans can be submitted to the Health Department in coordination with the County department that operates the facility.

County Response Priorities for 2021

PCHD is working to build infrastructure that supports a stronger community, using the lessons learned from our response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Some of the major priorities as we continue forward include:

- Increase the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines throughout Pima County
- Partner with healthcare entities to provide therapeutics and care to those with COVID-19
- Advance health equity and access to services for our diverse community
- Enhance public health infrastructure
- Increase engagement with Pima County residents
- Support individuals and families impacted by COVID-19

The Pima County Health Department helps to guide the COVID-19 response and recommend appropriate layered mitigation that should help minimize COVID-19 transmission and save lives. As we have realized over the previous months, the situation is fluid. PCHD recognizes the ongoing strain associated with the COVID-19 pandemic on individual lives as well as our educational institutions, businesses and community. PCHD remains grateful for the County residents' cooperation and commitment to wellness.