

Governor's News Conference (June 4, 2021)

Thank you, Governor Brown. Good morning, I'm Patrick Allen, director of the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

This morning I want to provide some updates and make a few observations as we enter the homestretch toward our goal of vaccinating 7 in 10 adult Oregonians.

I'm joined by Dr. Dean Sidelinger, who'll share the latest data on COVID-19 infections and deaths among people who are vaccinated and unvaccinated in Oregon.

As we begin the month of June, we're nearly six months into Oregon's COVID-19 vaccination drive. It's been close to six weeks since we expanded eligibility to all adults on April 19. During these past few months, we've seen the virus come roaring back and then begin to retreat.

In that time, a stark picture has emerged. There isn't one pandemic in Oregon – there are two: One is a pandemic that is dying out among people who are vaccinated. And the other is a pandemic that is raging as fiercely as ever among people who are unvaccinated.

Yesterday, OHA doctors and epidemiologists posted our latest report on breakthrough cases among people who were vaccinated in May.

- It found that 98% of the 16,097 COVID-19 cases recorded in May were among people who were unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated.
- More than nine in ten COVID-19 deaths occurred among people who were unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated.

I want to say that again.

- Last month, 16,097 people in Oregon caught COVID-19. Ninety-eight percent of those Oregonians were unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated.
- Among the 126 people who became severely ill and died of COVID-19 last month, more than nine in ten of those deaths occurred among people who were unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated.

The data clearly show that if you are fully vaccinated, you can begin to put the pandemic behind you. You can have confidence that a get-together with friends, a

family birthday celebration at a restaurant or a day at work alongside others won't put you at high-risk to contract or pass COVID-19.

- You have the peace of mind to know that if you have close contact with someone who is infected, you won't have to worry about quarantining yourself for an extended period.

But if you're unvaccinated, the threat of COVID-19 still shadows your life. Just as in the darkest days of last spring, last fall or earlier this winter, you're vulnerable to getting sick or worse – becoming seriously ill yourself or passing the virus to someone who might wind up in the hospital or dying.

- As before, if you come into close contact with a person who's infected with COVID-19, you'll need to quarantine for a period of time.

You can see the same dynamic playing out at the county level. Over the past month, most counties with high vaccination rates among adults also tend to have lower than median infection rates.

- Those counties include most counties that have topped the 65% threshold to move to low-risk, or are close to it such as: Benton, Clatsop, Hood River, Lane, Lincoln, Multnomah, Tillamook and Washington counties, which all have vaccination rates over 60 percent.
- Conversely, Crook, Klamath and Harney counties have lower-than-median vaccination rates, but significantly higher-than-median case rates over the past 30 days.

Dr. Sidelinger will provide more details in a few minutes. But it's clear that people who are getting COVID-19 are people who haven't had a shot. And people who aren't getting COVID-19 are people who've been immunized.

Those facts make sense and they shouldn't be a surprise. The vaccines were widely tested in clinical trials and doctors and medical experts tell us they're safe and effective. Our data in Oregon continues to prove it.

Now, let's look at where we are in getting to Governor Brown's goal to vaccinate 70% of adults in Oregon.

SLIDE: Trajectory to 70 percent

We're closing in. As of yesterday:

- More than 2.2 million Oregonians (2,266,998) have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- According to the CDC, Oregon has vaccinated 66.2% of adults – 2,217,841 people who are 18 or older.
 - That means we have to vaccinate approximately 127,000 more adults to reach our goal.
- Oregon ranks 18th in the nation in total population who've received at least one dose. According to the CDC, 55% of all Oregonians have had at least one vaccination. The national average is 51%.

However, it's clear we hit a speedbump over the Memorial Day weekend. Our daily average doses delivered dropped to 17,551, after some quiet days over the holidays.

While the pace began to pick back up over the week, it'll be a couple more days before all the data comes in and we can see if the numbers were a holiday anomaly or the emergence of a new trend.

But as this slide shows, we're still tracking at a level above our worst-case scenario, which would have us reaching 70 percent by June 21, the first day of summer.

I'm also encouraged to report that our partnerships with Federally Qualified Health Centers, community-based organizations and local public health departments are closing the vaccination gap between whites and communities of color. Over the past week:

- Vaccinations among Latinos increased 5%.
- Vaccinations among Black Oregonian increased 5.4%.
- Vaccinations among American Indian/Alaskan Natives increased 5.2%.
- Vaccinations among Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander communities increased 5%.
- Vaccinations among white Oregonians increased 2.5%.

Finally, beyond the incentives Governor Brown has announced and the many local partnerships we're pursuing to stage vaccination clinics in communities across Oregon, we see partners continuing to step up to vaccinate Oregonians.

This month, Albertsons/Safeway, CVS, Walgreens and Rite Aid pharmacies are all extending their hours to give more people a chance to get vaccinated. For example, Rite Aid will offer COVID vaccines on three Friday nights: June 11, 18, 25 until midnight.

We know many people who haven't chosen to get vaccinated yet aren't vaccine-resistant, just vaccine-inconvenient. They have little time outside the demands of family, multiple jobs or other commitments. We appreciate our pharmacy partners extending hours so more people can get in and get vaccinated.

Now let me turn it over to Dr. Sidelinger to talk more about why it's so important to get vaccinated.

Dr. Dean Sidelinger, Media Availability Talking points for (06-04-21)

Thank you, Governor Brown. I usually begin my comments with an overview of the state of the COVID-19 pandemic in Oregon. But this week I want to further profile the two pandemics Director Allen alluded to earlier.

In one pandemic, as we near the threshold of 70% of adult Oregonians getting at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine: Spread of the virus is clearly waning.

Daily cases and COVID-19 hospitalizations and the percentage of people testing positive are in steady decline since the most recent surge gripped us six weeks ago.

- Over the past week, we've seen a 13% drop in newly reported cases each day, marking the fifth consecutive week cases have fallen.

- On June 1, our 7-day moving average for daily cases is 318 which is a 61% lower than it was on May 1.
- Similarly, the weekly rate of positive tests for COVID-19 has also fallen dramatically from 6.9% May 1 to 4.3% on June 1.

COVID-19 related hospitalizations are following a similar trajectory.

- Over the past week hospitalizations have declined 11% and 24% during the past two weeks.
- Since May 1, there are 31% fewer virus-infected patients in our hospitals.

Serious COVID-19 illness is also on the downswing. On May 1, there were 71 COVID-19 patients in Intensive Care Units. Today, there are 57.

This is freeing up more of these critically needed beds for others in need of special medical care.

COVID-19 deaths are a lagging indicator -- they increased according to our most recent COVID-19 Weekly Report from 34 to 50. This is reflective of our recent surge in cases, which are now decreasing.

Every death from COVID-19 is tragic and is one too many. My thoughts go out to everyone who has lost a loved one to the virus.

Oregon has consistently ranked near the bottom among states in COVID-19 related deaths when we look throughout the pandemic.

We are also seeing counties move into lower risk categories based on decreasing cases and on the percentage of population vaccinated. This has resulted in the lifting of restrictions, allowing more of us to gather and return to the activities we enjoy with friends and families that we've missed.

Several times during this pandemic Oregonians have stepped up to turn back a resurgent tide. Thank you for that. During most of this pandemic the only effective tool for keeping the virus at bay was by keeping our distance, by limiting our gatherings, wearing masks and washing our hands.

But now we are also in possession of the ultimate tool for crushing the virus – widespread access to safe and effective vaccines.

The actions you've taken throughout these past 18 months have saved lives and have spared Oregon from many of the worst outcomes experienced in other states.

That's a testament to your collective efforts to stem the tide of the virus. Thank you.

And that brings us to the other pandemic profile.

This is one in which the shape-shifting virus now rages resulting in comparable impacts to what was experienced during the darkest days of the pandemic, among people that have not yet been vaccinated.

Our data in Oregon supports what we've observed in the science. People who are vaccinated against COVID-19 are at an extremely low risk of serious illness or death associated with the virus.

Let's look at data that shows the stark contrast between the two COVID-19 environments since vaccinations accelerated about three months ago.

Show Slide: Unvaxed cases + deaths

This slide shows COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths between vaccinated and unvaccinated people between March 1 and May 31 of this year.

- A staggering 98% of COVID 19 cases were in people who were either not vaccinated or **were** not yet fully vaccinated.
- An astonishing 94% of COVID-19 associated deaths were among the unvaccinated.

The overwhelming number of deaths among vaccinated people as reflected in this chart were elderly Oregonians, many in Long-Term Care Facilities and many with severely compromised immune systems.

Overall, counties that fared better in vaccinating their populations had lower case rates in comparison to counties that have lagged. These include some of Oregon's most populous counties. Vaccinations are making a difference.

Our data shows that difference starkly among older Oregonians as vaccinations rose in the population. We saw a sharp upward trajectory in vaccination rates as vaccinators reached most older Oregonians. At the same time cases decreased, with only small increases during our recent surge in cases across Oregon.

Slide 2 vac and 18+ slide

A similar though less dramatic trend is seen when we look across all adults – though we haven't reached the same level of success yet with vaccination rates.

The decision to get vaccinated is a very personal one. But the data unquestionably shows that the widespread availability of safe and highly effective vaccines has flipped the script in Oregon.

We can now determine whether to protect ourselves, our families and our communities by getting vaccinated.



For those who are vaccinated – or those who are in the process of completing a vaccination series – thank you. For those eligible who aren't yet vaccinated I urge you to step up, plan and get vaccinated.

We are not free of the ravages of COVID-19 just yet, but by vaccinating more Oregonians we can speed up the return to a normal life.

Oregonians have sacrificed and suffered for 18 months. Take that final step, get vaccinated -- a return to normal life is finally, at long last, within our reach.

And with that I will turn things over to Governor Brown.