

Governor's news conference (May 21, 2021)

Director Patrick Allen

Thank you, Governor Brown. I'm Patrick Allen, Director of the Oregon Health Authority. I'm joined by Dr. Dana Hargunani, our chief medical officer.

As we get ready to see the first counties in Oregon move to "Lower Risk" after they reached the 65% vaccination target, I want to provide some brief updates on our progress against the pandemic and the growth we've seen in vaccination rates.

First, recent trend data clearly show the latest COVID-19 surge is waning.

- Over the past week, we've seen a 16% drop in newly reported cases each day, marking the second consecutive week cases have fallen.
- Our 7-day moving average for daily cases is 486, which is 40% lower than it was on May 1.

These numbers are consistent with the modeling report Dr. Sidelinger released last week. That model estimated that transmission rates had fallen below the level the virus needs to spread at a self-sustaining rate.

The drop in new cases is in line with that forecast. And this turning point is likely due to multiple factors: Extreme Risk protections pumped the brakes in counties with the highest infection rates. Warmer weather invited more people outside. Most Oregonians continue to wear masks and limit the size and frequency of social gatherings. And, most importantly, more Oregonians have been getting vaccinated each day.

However, hospitalizations and deaths — which are both the most severe and tragic outcomes of COVID-19 and the last indicators to change — remain high.

- Over the past week, Oregon recorded 57 COVID-19 deaths. That number is the highest total in 10 weeks and it's a grim reminder of the threat COVID-19 still poses to the lives of Oregonians of all ages.
 - We're reporting the loss of 7 more Oregonians today and my deepest sympathies go out to their families.

- As of today, there are 285 COVID-19 positive patients in Oregon’s hospitals. We’ve seen more than a 14% decrease over the past week and a 9% decrease since May 1.
 - Hospitalizations are still too high, continuing to stress doctors and nurses in ICUs across the state, but it’s encouraging to see them coming down.
 - However, I want to note that hospitalizations for African-Americans have spiked in recent weeks. We cannot let an overall downward trend mask a disturbing development for a community that’s been hit especially hard by COVID-19 across the country. We’re working with community organizations and local health officials to speed vaccinations for African-Americans in Oregon and prevent more cases of severe illness in the community.

And as we try to stamp out the virus, we continue to see increases in our most effective tool to end the pandemic: vaccinations. Let’s look at our latest vaccination numbers.

Oregon’s vaccination totals continue to grow. We remain on track to pass Governor Brown’s target to vaccinate 70% of adult Oregonians before the end of June.

- **63% of Oregonians who are 18 or older have received at least one vaccination.**
 - More than 2.1 million Oregonians have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
 - According to the latest data, 1,656,783 Oregonians have been fully vaccinated.
 - Oregon vaccinators have now administered at least one shot to 52% of **our total population**, according to the CDC.
 - Oregon now ranks 19th in the nation (including the District of Columbia) in the percentage of our total population who’ve received at least one dose. The national average is 48%.
 - As of yesterday, Oregon is averaging a total of more than 29,000 first and second doses each day.

- Most important: We're continuing to see the rate of vaccinations pick up among communities of color. Over the past week, the rate of change for African-Americans was nearly 9%. For Latinos, it was 7%, while for Whites it was just under 5%.
 - That's an encouraging sign that our partnerships with the community are continuing to expand vaccination opportunities and building confidence among communities of color.

Over the past week, our total statewide percentage change for everyone 16 and older was 1.3%, which was down from the prior week. But that figure was affected by an abnormally low number of vaccinations on Mother's Day and the days immediately after. The numbers have picked up again recently.

As of now, we remain above the rate we need to reach the targets Governor Brown announced last week.

- As you know, we plotted scenarios that took into account our current growth rates and any potential drop-offs of 10%, 25% and 50%.
- Under all our current scenarios, Oregon is on pace to vaccinate 70% of adults before June 27 at the latest, according to these scenarios.

As we track Oregon's vaccination targets, let me clear up some confusion over the numbers we are using to calculate this metric.

We are using the CDC's calculation of percentage of people who are 18 and older to track our progress toward our state-level target to vaccinate the 70% of adult Oregonians required to lift the risk metrics.

We do this for two reasons:

- The CDC data offers a more comprehensive, complete and accurate picture of total vaccinations in Oregon because the federal data includes vaccinations administered by the Veterans Administration, Indian Health Service and other federal entities.
- The CDC data also enables us to track our progress against the goal the Biden administration has set for the nation. The CDC data is less reliable at the county-level, because it doesn't always include the county of

residence information for people who are vaccinated through those federal entities.

- For county vaccination rates, we'll rely on Oregon's ALERT Immunization Information System.

In the past, CDC reported "all eligibles" in their data reports, which included 16- and 17-year-olds with adults. That's why you've seen some definitions of our statewide 70% vaccination targets that refer to 16-year-olds.

- CDC's data reporting categories changed when older children between 12 and 15 became eligible to get vaccinated.
- Now, CDC's report for people who are 18 and older only includes adults.

Now, let's talk about at our county targets, where we're also continuing to see progress.

On Monday, five counties became the first in the state to move into lower risk after vaccinating 65% of eligible residents with at least one dose and submitting vaccine equity plans to OHA. Those counties are: Benton, Deschutes, Hood River, Lincoln and Washington Counties.

That's an exciting milestone in this pandemic. And, as I said last week, the diverse range of population sizes, geographies, urban, suburban, rural and coastal mix of these counties shows that every Oregon county has the capacity to reach the 65% target.

Looking ahead, we know other counties have reached the 65% threshold since last week or they are on pace to do so. Multnomah County is now above 65%. Lane, Polk and Tillamook Counties are near 60% or above.

We look forward to working with those counties and every other county in Oregon to support their equity plans and to help them reach the 65% target to move to "Lower Risk."

There are many reasons to get vaccinated. We know from national surveys and surveys we've conducted in Oregon that more and more people are choosing to get vaccinated. For many people, the question hasn't been whether to get vaccinated — it's when they can fit a COVID-19 vaccination into their busy lives.



I hope the incentives Governor Brown announced this morning encourage many Oregonians to prioritize getting vaccinated in the coming weeks.

Getting vaccinated is a very personal decision. And it makes a big difference for you, the people you care about and everyone around you.

Oregon is closing in on our 70% vaccination goal, which will allow all of us to return to a more normal life, without the restrictions and limitations we've had to rely on to fight COVID-19 for the past year and a half.

To find out where to get a vaccine or to get answers to your questions, go to covidvaccine.oregon.gov and make your plan to get vaccinated.

And with that, I'll turn it back to Governor Brown.