

## **Media Availability Talking Points 08-11-21**

Thank you, Governor Brown.

The COVID-19 pandemic in Oregon has now reached a dire stage. Daily infections and hospitalizations have reached new pandemic highs in recent days.

Oregonians' sick with COVID – nearly all of them unvaccinated – are on the verge of overflowing our hospital beds, posing a critical threat to all Oregonians in need of hospital care.

This onslaught of new cases and virus-related hospitalizations is far outpacing even the grim scenarios projected in our most recent modeling report. The report estimated that we could expect about 1,170 daily cases and 95 new hospitalized per day by the end of next week. Reported new cases have exceeded that projection three times in the past five days. New hospitalizations increased by 30 today and 60 yesterday.

The unrelenting Delta variant is sweeping through our communities and there are no immediate signs that this rising tide will subside anytime soon.

Unless we act immediately to reverse this dangerous trend.

My plea today is to every Oregonian who has not yet been vaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccine is saving lives. We can bring this surge under control by vaccinating as many people as possible.

The data in Oregon reaffirms what the science has long supported: Just how incredibly effective all three of the available vaccines are in preventing severe COVID-19 infection leading to hospitalization.

The Delta variant now accounts for almost every newly reported COVID-19 case. It is three times more infectious than previous mutations of the virus. It is now the dominant variant circulating in Oregon and across the country.

If you are unvaccinated, the risk of being sickened by the virus or ending up seriously ill or dying from COVID-19 has never been greater.

I've spoken before about the two pandemics that are currently unfolding in Oregon.

Let's examine how counties with vaccination rates above 60 percent are faring as opposed to counties with lower vaccination rates.

***Show Slide***

This slide shows that as vaccinations increased, hospitalization rates rose more slowly in counties with high vaccination rates. We see the opposite in those counties with lower vaccination rates.

Vaccines are preventing serious disease and saving lives.

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The evidence is overwhelming. Vaccination remains the best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 and to keep the virus from spreading among our loved ones, our friends and neighbors, and our communities.

Eighteen months ago, we reported the first case of COVID-19 in Oregon. Today more than 2.5 million Oregonians have had at least a first dose of the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines - including 2.3 million Oregonians who have completed the vaccine series.

To all of you who have taken the time and effort to get the vaccine - thank-you. Your actions have saved the lives of your loved ones, your friends, your colleagues, and your neighbors.

Now we have reached yet another crossroads. Our actions over the next several weeks will be critical to ensuring that our hospitals have enough capacity to meet the needs of all patients needing care.

For those eligible and not yet vaccinated – reach out to get your questions answered and make a plan to get your shot.

Several times throughout the course of this pandemic Oregonians stepped up collectively to turn back the surging tide

We have the chance to do it again.

The Governor's announcement today requiring mask wearing in public indoor settings is an important step.

The use of facemasks provides significant protection of people who are unvaccinated as well as providing additional protection against the small risk of infection that exists for vaccinated people.

They protect the person wearing the mask – as well as those around them. When we all wear our masks indoors in public – we will slow the spread we are currently seeing that threatens to exceed our hospital capacity – thus ensuring we all have access to the quality care we deserve.

I urge everyone, regardless of vaccination status, to please follow this important public health intervention.

We have the power to crush the virus by getting vaccinated and wearing masks.

Let's work together now to ensure that we can return to the progress Oregon made in fighting back previous surges. Let's keep our students safely in school in front of talented teachers and look forward to celebrating the winter holidays in 2021 more like 2019 and not like 2020.

Now I will turn things back to Governor Brown.

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