

A CoVID-19 Update From 307Health
September 15, 2021

We have been fielding many questions about the current CoVID-19 activity level and its impact in our communities. This CoVID-19 update is written in lieu of a September 2021 newsletter in an effort to answer these frequent questions.

Current Local Virus Activity

The current CoVID-19 activity in the Bighorn Basin is high. We here at the clinic are seeing activity higher than the rates we saw with the original strain in November and December 2020. The high CoVID-19 activity in Wyoming is due to the Delta variant which does appear to be more infectious. Our experience to this point is that the severity is similar the original strain. The current rate of positive tests is around 30% both at the local hospitals and here at the clinic (3 out of every 10 tests completed is positive), but this number also includes testing completed for contact tracing and return to work or school.

Bed capacity in local hospitals now hovers near full capacity such that the Billings hospitals are not able to always take the sickest patients. Thus, our local hospitals are working on their contingency plans to care for patients that cannot be transported to Billings – whether the transfer need be for CoVID-19 or other serious medical issues. Hospital bed capacity has been one of our main concerns from the beginning of the pandemic because we always want to be able to send our patients to hospitals that have the appropriate specialists and capabilities no matter the health issue should it be CoVID-19, a heart attack, or a stroke.

Given the current circumstances, hospital capacity is a serious issue all Americans should understand, not just those in the medical field or those with CoVID-19. A good public source to follow hospital bed capacity in Wyoming is [COVID-19: Hospital Resources in WY \(google.com\)](#) .

Breakthrough Infections

We can confirm that within our clinic population “breakthrough” infections are being seen in previously vaccinated patients. In the last month, approximately five 307Health patients developed infections who have had the Pfizer vaccine and two patients who have had the Moderna vaccine. As expected though, these breakthrough infections have been generally mild.

307Health has also confirmed at least two cases of second infections in patients who were believed to have contracted CoVID-19 from the original strain and now have contracted CoVID-19 again from the Delta strain.

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Testing

307Health is fortunate to have multiple testing options - mainly provided by the Wyoming Department of Health and paid for by your tax dollars.

- **Rapid Antigen Test-** The antigen test is performed at the 307Health clinic with results in fifteen minutes. The test looks for actual virus particles in the nose. The test works best in the first days of symptoms as the CoVID-19 infection takes hold. The test can have false negative results (test result is negative although the patient has CoVID-19) and so - in select cases - we may still perform a PCR test if we highly suspect CoVID-19 but the antigen test is negative. This test is currently provided free from the state Department of Health.
- **Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Test-** The PCR test is the most accurate test available to us and looks for the genetic material of the virus in the nose. We have two versions of this test available - a free option that ships out with results back in 48-72 hours and a same day option with results back within 24-hours. The same-day test costs \$110 billed through Powell Hospital and is usually covered by insurance.
- **Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT)-** The NAAT, much like the PCR test, looks for virus genetic material in the nose. We are working to get this test up and running onsite at 307Health. Once operational, this test will give results in 15-30 minutes and is provided free to patients through the Wyoming Department of Health.

Vaccination

For those who have not received a vaccine, we do continue to highly recommend vaccination because the transmission rates of SARS-CoV2 (coronavirus) clearly show no sign of letting up.

While there are breakthrough infections in folks who are vaccinated as discussed below, the literature is clear that vaccination decreases the chances that a patient with breakthrough CoVID-19 will be hospitalized or die. Thus, we believe that developing immunity to the coronavirus with vaccination support will only be helpful now and in the future.

Here is an excellent visual helping us to realize the benefit of the vaccines:

[COVID Numbers Perspective \(childrensmn.org\)](https://www.childrensmn.org/COVID-Numbers-Perspective)

Free vaccine is currently available locally at Park County Public Health, Powell Drug, Walmart, Walgreens, and Billings Clinic Cody. 307Health does not carry or administer the vaccine.

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Booster Shots

Research has shown that the Pfizer vaccine is now only 50-60% effective in preventing Delta CoVID-19 infection, while the Moderna vaccine remains in the 70-80% range effective. This means that if you have been vaccinated and are exposed to a person with CoVID-19, your chances of developing the infection are 40-50% for Pfizer and 20-30% for Moderna. As discussed above, though, both vaccines remain very effective in decreasing an infected person's chances of hospitalization and death.

The decreasing effectiveness of the vaccines is believed to be partially due to waning immunity strength - partially due to the time lapsed from receiving the vaccine (6-8 months) and partially due to the difference between the coronavirus Delta strain and the original coronavirus strain for which the initial vaccines had been created to mimic. For this reason, the FDA has cleared a booster vaccine dose for patients who are immune compromised and, therefore, may not have created a strong immune response with the first round of vaccination.

As of publication of this newsletter, the FDA has NOT approved a booster vaccine for the elderly or the general public. The FDA and CDC are reviewing the manufacturers' research safety and efficacy data and will have a decision soon on this question. We will continue to monitor these recommendations closely and notify you when this recommendation is given by the CDC and/or the FDA.

Isolation / Quarantine

We continue to recommend our patients follow the CDC guidelines for isolation and quarantine as described here - Centers For Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) - [COVID-19-19 Quarantine and Isolation | CDC](#); and here - Wyoming Department Of Health - [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) - Wyoming Department of Health](#) .

Here is a summary of these guidelines -

- **Isolation** is for a patient who has contracted CoVID-19. The recommendation is for the patient to isolate in their house (sleeping in their own room, using their own bathroom, etc.) for a minimum of TEN days from the onset of symptoms. They may return to work / school / public exposure after TEN days and significant resolution of symptoms, i.e. no fever for 24 hours, no significant cough, etc.
- **Quarantine** is for a person who has been in "contact" with another person who is sick with CoVID-19. A "contact" is defined as being within 6 feet of a sick person for 10 to 15 minutes (cumulative over 24 hours).
 - For an unvaccinated person, they should quarantine for ten days and return to public life without testing. Alternatively, an unvaccinated person may return to public life after 7 days if they test negative for CoVID-19 on day 5 or later from exposure.

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- For a vaccinated person, they may remain in public life but should wear a mask for 14 days and closely monitor for CoVID-19 symptoms. A vaccinated person may be cleared from mask wearing with a negative CoVID-19 test on day 3 or later.

A caveat to the above guidelines is the Park County School District #1 policy on quarantine. The schools will allow students who have been in “contact” with another student with CoVID-19 to either quarantine at home for 7 to 10 days – OR – they may remain at school if they wear a mask and monitor for symptoms.

Treatment Options

Specific treatments for patients with CoVID-19 remain limited for general public use. For patients at high risk for being hospitalized with CoVID-19 (chronic heart or lung diseases, obesity, immune problems, etc.) we do have access to monoclonal antibody infusion therapy (Regeneron) through area hospitals.

We have fielded many questions about ivermectin use. The medical literature is unclear on the helpfulness of ivermectin in patients with CoVID-19 when comparing its risks to its possible benefits. We are open to having discussions with patients about the use of ivermectin within the constraints of our licensure.

In closing, we are in a very serious phase of this pandemic. We ask for your patience - especially as you encounter healthcare workers who are working hard to get us through this tough time. Lastly, thank you for putting your trust in our team here at 307Health. We are always available to answer your questions!

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