NEWS RELEASE

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Vaccination More Urgent Than Ever
COVID-19 Cases Increase and Delta Variant Spreads in Georgia

ATLANTA – If you were waiting for the right time to get vaccinated, that time is **now**! The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is urging Georgians to get vaccinated as the number of new COVID-19 cases increases daily and the Delta variant spreads.

The COVID case rate in Georgia has increased 204% over the last 14-day period. Yesterday new cases totaled 4,612 – the highest daily number since mid-February. Hospitalizations have increased by about 50% in the last 14 days, and deaths have increased by about 18% in the same period. Vaccination has stalled statewide and only 40% of Georgians are fully vaccinated.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates the Delta variant accounts for 78% of new COVID cases in Georgia, making vaccination more urgent than ever. The Delta variant spreads more than twice as easily from one person to another, compared with earlier strains. The highest spread of cases and severe outcomes are happening in places with low vaccination rates, and virtually all hospitalizations and deaths continue to be among the unvaccinated.

"Unfortunately, we can expect COVID numbers to keep growing. People who are unvaccinated or skip their second dose of vaccine are targets for infection," said Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health. "Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the Delta variant. High vaccination coverage will reduce spread of the virus in your community and elsewhere - and help prevent new variants from emerging."

All Georgians aged 12 and older are urged to get vaccinated against COVID-19. If you receive either Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, you must get your second dose to ensure you are fully protected. Individuals are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their final dose of vaccine.

COVID vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. are safe and effective against COVID-19 and the variants that are circulating. Vaccination is the best defense at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations and death. The delta variant is causing some "vaccine breakthrough infections," meaning infections in fully vaccinated people, but even so, most breakthrough infections are mild. In areas with substantial and high transmission (https://dph.georgia.gov/county-indicator-reports), the CDC recommends that everyone (including fully vaccinated individuals) wear a mask in public indoor settings to help prevent spread of COVID-19 and the Delta variant.

We protect lives.

COVID vaccines are free and widely available statewide without insurance or identification. To find a vaccination location or to schedule an appointment, visit https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine.

For updates on COVID-19, follow @GaDPH and @GovKemp on Twitter and @GaDPH and @GovKemp on Facebook.

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