

# Public Health Madison & Dane County: Dane County moves into “High” COVID-19 Community Level

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On July 21, 2022, Dane County moved into the Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) “high” [COVID-19 community level](#). At this level, in accordance with CDC guidance, Public Health Madison & Dane County recommends that everyone be up-to-date on their vaccines and take additional precautions, including wearing a mask in indoor public spaces.

“In Dane County, the cases reported to us have remained stable over the last two months, but hospitalizations in our region have seen a gradual increase,” said Janel Heinrich, director of Public Health Madison & Dane County. “At this level, it’s time to layer proven prevention strategies to slow spread and the protect health of our friends, family, and community members.”

The CDC calculates community levels based on [three indicators](#): new reported cases per 100,000 people in the last seven days, new regional hospital admissions with COVID-19 per 100,000 people in the last seven days, and percent of regional inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients.

While reported cases locally are stable, they are likely underreported, given the accessibility of rapid tests. Last week, an average of 64 people were hospitalized with COVID. Hospitalization rates remain much lower than the surge experienced at the beginning of the year.

“Given evidence this new variant may more easily evade immunity it’s especially important we protect ourselves and our neighbors,” County Executive Joe Parisi said. “We all want to move past talking about and responding to COVID, but variations of the virus remain, and we need to keep looking out for one another.”

“We’re seeing this trend of communities moving to medium and high levels nationwide, and it is possible we could bounce between medium and high levels for a few weeks,” said Heinrich. “Being aware of our local landscape—especially if you are immunocompromised or at risk of severe illness—and taking appropriate actions can help prevent the spread of the virus.”

All masks and respirators provide some level of protection. However, [properly fitting respirators](#)—like N95 and KN95s—provide the highest level of protection. Wearing a highly protective mask or respirator may be most important in certain higher risk situations, or by some people at [increased risk for severe disease](#). Wearing a mask offers protection to the wearer, even if those around them are unmasked.

“It’s so important that people stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations and get tested when sick or when identified as a close contact,” says City of Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway. “Business owners can also take action by doing things like supporting less crowded working environments and improving ventilation.”

There are many opportunities to get vaccinated and tested in Dane County. Anyone who needs free N95 masks can find options nearby at [bit.ly/freemasksnearme](https://bit.ly/freemasksnearme).

For more information about COVID-19 in Dane County visit [publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus](https://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus). You can also follow @publichealthmdc on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).