

# Amid latest COVID-19 surge, Minnesota's infection rate is now nation's worst

Hospitalizations and case rates continue to worsen

By [CHRISTOPHER MAGAN](#) | [cmagan@pioneerpress.com](mailto:cmagan@pioneerpress.com) | Pioneer Press

PUBLISHED: November 15, 2021 at 11:58 a.m. | UPDATED: November 15, 2021 at 6:51 p.m.

Minnesota added 5,266 new coronavirus cases Monday and now has the worst rate of COVID-19 infections in the nation.

In the last week, Minnesota reported more than 27,600 new cases, or roughly 476 infections for every 100,000 residents. That means Minnesota's current rate of infections is nearly three times the national average, according to data released Monday by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

New Mexico, North Dakota, Alaska and New Hampshire round out the top five states with the worst rates of infection, according to the CDC.

COVID-19 hospitalizations in Minnesota hit another record for the year on Monday as the state's fourth wave intensifies. There were 1,282 patients hospitalized as of Friday, including 311 in intensive care.

The last time Minnesota hospitals were this full with COVID-19 patients was in December 2020 during the state's worst surge.

Hospital capacity is extremely limited, with just 33 intensive care beds available statewide. Only 5 percent of the state's 7,327 regular hospital beds are currently empty.

No deaths were reported Monday because of a delay in data reporting from the Veterans Day holiday on Thursday. Minnesota typically reports new pandemic data each business day and that information is current through 4 a.m. the previous business day.

The death toll is 8,996 since the pandemic began, with 4,835 deaths in long-term care.

The 5,266 new infections reported Monday were the result of nearly 51,000 tests. Test positivity is above 9 percent and continues to climb.

State officials continue to urge residents to get vaccinated against COVID-19, saying it is the best way to prevent a severe infection and to slow the spread of the highly contagious delta variant of the coronavirus.

But as more virus circulates in the community, infections, hospitalizations and deaths in people who are fully vaccinated continue to climb. Breakthrough cases account for 16.9 percent of all infections diagnosed in 2021 as well as 15.2 percent of hospitalizations and 15.7 percent of deaths.

Health officials say breakthrough rates are not an accurate measure of vaccine efficacy. But the rate of such cases has grown significantly this fall.

A four-week period from mid-September to mid-October, the latest available data from the Minnesota Department of Health, shows that 39 percent of cases, 32 percent of hospitalizations and 45 percent of deaths were people who were fully vaccinated.

The majority of those cases are in older people who were inoculated early in the vaccine campaign. They also tend to mount a less robust immune response to vaccination.

To bolster waning immunity, booster shots are recommended for seniors and people with underlying health conditions, six months after the last dose. Anyone who got the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine is eligible for a booster.

Minnesota has administered 7.2 million doses of vaccine, including 616,621 boosters. More than 3.5 million people have gotten at least one dose, roughly 67 percent of the population. However, some 2 million people in the state remain unvaccinated and susceptible to infection.