

News Release

DHHS COVID-19 Weekly Update

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LINCOLN – The latest statewide total of COVID-19 cases is 188,122 as of Jan. 26. There have been 55 COVID-19-related deaths in Nebraska reported in the last seven days, for a total of 1,905. To date, a total of 133,206 Nebraskans testing positive for COVID-19 have recovered.

While still elevated, COVID-19 hospitalizations are continuing to come down, with Nebraska hospitals caring for an average of 402 COVID-19 patients a day over the last seven days. Averages in prior weeks were 444, 481 and 522 COVID-19 patients.

The daily average of new positive cases in the last week was 706, compared to 788 daily cases last week, and 948 and 1,036 cases a day in recent weeks.

	Jan. 5	Jan. 12	Jan. 19	Jan. 26
Total positive cases	171,033	177,670	183,318	188,122
Current hospitalizations	515	457	438	374

Total deaths	1,692	1,791	1,850	1,905
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Dr. Gary Anthonie, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health for DHHS, said, "We're still in the early days of this vaccination effort and so it's critical we continue to limit virus spread. Wearing a mask, washing hands, and staying home when you're sick are the best tools to fight against COVID-19."

Anyone who may have been exposed to COVID-19 should quarantine and get tested.

Nebraskans can be #BigRedResponsible by wearing a mask. Additionally, watching your distance, washing hands often, staying home when you're sick, and avoiding the 3Cs – crowded places, close contact with others, and confined spaces – are still critical to limiting infection.

Vaccine Update

Later this week, DHHS will launch a website to help Nebraskans register to be notified when COVID-19 vaccination begins in their area. Gov. Pete Ricketts will be joined by DHHS leaders to discuss the site during a news conference on Friday, Jan. 29 at 10 a.m. CT.

Registration is not done on a first come, first served basis. Many local health departments have offered electronic signup for vaccine notification, and those 65 and older who have signed up **do not need** to register a second time. Local health departments will work with DHHS to migrate all registrations.

However, those 18 to 65 with a high-risk medical condition are asked to register using the state site to best ensure proper prioritization in Phase 1B. Family members and caregivers are encouraged to assist with vaccine sign-up if needed.

Those interested in registering will need to provide name and contact information, date of birth, occupation, and answer health questions used to help determine priority group eligibility. Any information entered is strictly

confidential and used solely for this purpose. The DHHS Information line will be available to help assist those with limited or no phone or Internet access. A Spanish version of the website is in development.

DHHS immunization leaders will hold a Facebook Live session tomorrow, Thursday, Jan. 28 at 12 p.m. CT to discuss the vaccine registration website and answer questions. For those unable to join, the discussion will be archived and available on the video tab of the [DHHS Facebook page](#) .

Most areas in the state have completed first dose vaccinations for Phase 1A groups, and second doses will be scheduled appropriately to complete vaccination in the coming weeks. Phase 1A includes frontline health care workers and residents and staff of long-term care facilities.

Douglas and Lancaster County are finalizing most Phase 1A first dose vaccinations this week and expect to begin Phase 1B vaccinations the first part of February.

By the end of this week, all Nebraska health care workers will have had the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. More than 26,000 of Nebraska's health care workers have received their second dose to complete vaccination.

Residents and staff at 455 long-term care facilities have received their first vaccine dose. The state directed 11,700 Pfizer second doses from this week's vaccine allocation to the Federal Pharmacy Program to support second dose clinics, which will help complete vaccinations for long-term care facilities and close out the Federal Pharmacy Program.

In addition, this week Nebraska is receiving 11,700 Pfizer first doses, 11,800 Moderna first doses, and 11,200 Moderna second doses.

Phase 1B priority groups include those 65 and older, and those aged 18 and older who are at high-risk for severe COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [lists a number of medical conditions](#)  known to increase the risk for severe COVID-19.

Phase 1B also includes those working in critical industries who are unable to work remotely, including: first responders, educators, those in the utilities and transportation sectors, and food processing workers.

Local health departments are coordinating vaccination for Phase 1 priority groups.

Community clinics with scheduled appointments will be the primary way vaccine doses are given while supplies remain limited to help ensure all doses can be used in the required timeframe. Community clinics will stagger appointments in order to observe social distancing and provide space for monitoring after vaccination.

COVID-19 vaccines are not yet available to the public and it's expected to be late spring before mass vaccination begins.

The Pfizer vaccine was 95% effective and the Moderna vaccine 94% effective in phase three clinical trials. Comparatively, the flu vaccine is generally 40 to 60% effective. Neither vaccine contains a live virus and cannot give individuals COVID-19.

Two vaccine doses are needed to reach full effectiveness against COVID-19, and the same brand of vaccine must be administered for both doses. Thus far, the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for those 16 and older, and the Moderna vaccine approved for those 18 and older.

The state is taking recommendations of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) into consideration. Priority groups and timing projections remain tentative and will be adjusted as federal recommendations are issued and as vaccine shipments are scheduled.

Vaccine Dashboard

As of Tuesday, nearly 143,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been given to those in Phase 1 priority groups.

To follow Nebraska's COVID-19 vaccination progress, please visit the [COVID-19 Vaccination dashboard](#) . As of Tuesday, 1.78% of Nebraskans aged 16 or older have completed vaccination.

The vaccination dashboard is updated each evening with data from the prior day.

COVID-19 Case Dashboard

Starting Saturday, Jan. 30, the [Nebraska COVID-19 Case Dashboard](#)  will update to report daily positive cases based on the date the test was taken, instead of the lab reporting date.

In addition, case dashboard updates will shift from evenings to approximately 9 a.m. CT and report data from the prior day. These changes will help capture any tests reported after the close of business, and provide a more accurate view of all Nebraska cases over time.

COVID-19 Testing – Travel Guidance

Testing continues to be crucial to limiting the spread of COVID-19. Anyone who may have been exposed to COVID-19, anyone experiencing any symptoms, those planning to travel, or those who are returning from travel are encouraged to schedule a COVID-19 test.

Free testing is available at more than 60 Test Nebraska sites across the state.

Those planning international travel are advised that travelers returning to the U.S. are now required to provide proof of a COVID-19 test taken no more than 3 days before their return flight. Returning travelers need to present either a negative result or documentation of having recovered from COVID-19 to their airline before boarding.

The order applies to all passengers two years and older traveling to the U.S., including citizens and permanent residents. [More on the requirement is](#)

available from the CDC [↗](#).

COVID-19 symptoms can include a fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, tiredness, muscle aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

Visit Testnebraska.com [↗](#), or TestNebraska.com/es [↗](#) for Spanish, to schedule an appointment. Those with questions about testing, or who need help completing the online assessment, can call the **Test Nebraska hotline** at (402) 207-9377.

Directed Health Measures

A five-phase series of Directed Health Measures (DHMs) is in effect for the entire state. DHM restrictions are aimed at preserving hospital capacity for urgent medical care.

The state has been in the blue threshold since the end of December, with indoor gatherings restricted to 75% of capacity.

Currently less than 10% of hospital beds are needed for COVID-19 patients. If hospitalizations continue to remain below the 10% threshold, DHMs could be relaxed this weekend. An outline of DHMs tied to Nebraska's COVID-19 hospitalization rate is available [here](#). [📄](#)

DHHS continues to share new information via its [Coronavirus website](#), as well as on [Facebook](#) [↗](#) and [Twitter](#) [↗](#). In addition, the DHHS COVID-19 information line is available to answer questions at 531-249-1873 or 833-998-2275. The hotline is staffed seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. CT.

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