



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Northwest Georgia health care facilities urge action

(Sept. 3, 2021) — We need your help like never before. The pandemic—its current surge driven by the highly transmissible Delta variant—continues to spread throughout Northwest Georgia and is quickly becoming a pandemic of the unvaccinated. Most new cases, hospitalizations and people in our critical care units on ventilators and advanced oxygen support are unvaccinated.

Today, only 35 percent of citizens in Northwest Georgia are fully vaccinated, leaving the unvaccinated highly vulnerable to contracting and spreading COVID-19.

While a few municipalities have declared a state of emergency, if you look across the regional health care landscape, there is no mistaking that we are experiencing a public health crisis.

COVID-19 hospitalizations have increased dramatically and are straining our hospitals. Deaths, which can lag hospitalizations by a few weeks, are increasing significantly, leaving families broken and torn apart and frontline workers physically and emotionally exhausted.

Breakthrough infections—fully vaccinated individuals becoming infected—do happen, but most cases are relatively mild. Studies of over 4.5 million fully vaccinated Georgians show that the fully vaccinated are at low risk of becoming infected and at almost no risk of being hospitalized or dying.

Cases and hospitalizations among school-aged children have increased to levels not yet seen in the pandemic. We are seeing the highest number of weekly outbreaks in our schools since the pandemic began. This is preventable because many in this group are eligible for vaccination.

Individuals only seeking COVID-19 testing should not go to hospital emergency departments or call EMS unless experiencing urgent or emergent symptoms such as severe respiratory distress, stroke symptoms, trauma, etc. Please help us keep our hospital emergency departments open so we can treat medical emergencies.

COVID-19 testing is currently available at different sites across Northwest Georgia. Information about these facilities, including address and hours of operation, can be found at www.DPH.Georgia.gov and www.NGHD.org. Testing is also available at most urgent care, primary care and pharmacy locations.

Let's work together to stop the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19. We strongly urge everyone age 12 and older to get vaccinated, wear a mask in public settings where social distancing is not possible and wash their hands frequently. The vaccines work. They are safe and they prevent serious illness, hospitalization and death. If you haven't been vaccinated, please protect yourself, your loved ones and your community by doing so.

COVID-19 vaccination is our best tool for reducing the overwhelming strain on our health care system, health care providers and EMS personnel. To find a vaccination location, visit www.Vaccines.gov.

Dr. Gary Voccio and Dr. Zachary Taylor
Georgia Department of Public Health

Mike Murrill
AdventHealth Southeast Region, CEO

Kurt Stuenkel
Floyd Health System, CEO

Jeff Myers
Hamilton Medical Center, CEO

Kenna Stock
Harbin Clinic, CEO

Chris Mosley
Piedmont Cartersville Medical Center, CEO

John Quinlivan
Redmond Regional Medical Center, CEO