



GRAND COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

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September 24, 2021

Advisory Notice for Grand County, Colorado

We are at a critical point. We are seeing a surge in pediatric cases in Grand County. These are cases of COVID-19 in individuals 18 years old and younger. Many of these cases are due to exposures outside of the school setting, such as events and social gatherings where protective measures are not commonplace. In addition to those cases, we are also seeing spread taking place within some sports teams, both within and outside of the school districts.

We have had four confirmed deaths caused by COVID complications in Grand County since the beginning of September. Our sincerest condolences go out to the families and friends of these individuals.

Hospitals are getting close to maximum capacities so much so that even general hospital beds are getting difficult to find. Many patients are being cared for in emergency departments rather than in a proper hospital bed or ICU.

Public Health can do a lot to help mitigate the spread of COVID, and help to provide understanding of how this and other diseases work. There is not much Public Health can do to change individual behaviors and what we decide to do when we are not at work or school.

We can make the decision to protect ourselves, our students, and our community by taking every step necessary to help weaken COVID-19's opportunities to spread and cause severe illness. These prevention methods work best when layered by reducing disruptions to our students, staff, and businesses due to illness and quarantines.

- 1) Get vaccinated if you are eligible
- 2) Wear a mask in public indoor spaces regardless of vaccine status
- 3) Interact with others in outdoor spaces or well ventilated areas
- 4) Distance yourself 6 ft from others outside of your household
- 5) Get tested if you are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19
- 6) Stay home if you are sick or waiting for a COVID test result

Mandates from Grand County Public Health may help to prevent some of these cases, but the primary issue is spread of illness taking place outside of a structured environment where spacing and masking don't typically occur.

This is up to US to take the necessary precautions to make a difference for Grand County. Choose not to go to events that are high risk. Choose not to send children to school with COVID-19 symptoms. Choose to keep distance between your household and others. Choose events that have some requirements for attendance such as proof of vaccine, mask requirements, and/or testing available at the door. Choose to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Vaccines are proving to be about 75% effective at preventing illness, and 86-92% effective at reducing severe illness, hospitalization, and death against COVID-19. No vaccine is 100% effective at preventing illness. Our goal is to prevent severe illness and death from happening and reduce the need for hospitalization. COVID-19 vaccine is available in multiple locations in Grand County. Take a look at our website for where you can get your vaccine <https://www.co.grand.co.us/vaccine>.

Using these prevention measures will also help our hospitals rebound from the huge increase in demand for hospital beds and ICU beds.

Public Health offers free rapid testing between 10am and 12pm on Tuesdays and Fridays at 620 Hemlock St, Hot Sulphur Springs, CO. No appointment is needed.

*This testing is not meant to fulfill employers need to have employees tested weekly to meet serial testing requirements. Public Health is working with Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to find a solution to accommodate these needs.

If you are preparing for travel and need a test, please plan ahead. If the rapid testing schedule doesn't work for your travel needs, reach out to your medical provider. Testing options are available on our website- <https://www.co.grand.co.us/1419/COVID-Testing-Options-in-Grand-County>

*The most reliable test is a PCR test. If you have symptoms and receive a negative rapid test, please follow up with your provider to confirm that negative test result.

We have an opportunity to prevent additional restrictions being imposed upon our county and prevent over running our already strained healthcare systems. Public health fully supports individual rights and decision making in our community. In our community, even small, individual decisions can have a big impact. We need to take action.

Stay diligent and stay safe!

Sincerely,

Abbie Baker-MPH, CHES
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