



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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ALLEGANY SEES 135 NEW COVID CASES, EIGHT ADDITIONAL DEATHS: Health Officials Urge Caution During Holiday Celebrations

CUMBERLAND, MD – The Allegheny County Health Department reports that Allegheny County's cumulative COVID-19 case count is now at 4,983, with 135 deaths. The current case rate in Allegheny County is 109.76 cases per 100,000 population, while Maryland's state average is currently 42.84 cases per 100,000 population. Allegheny's positivity rate is now at 15.68%, while the statewide average is 7.77%.

The state of Maryland began rolling out Phase 1A of its COVID-19 vaccination program this week. In each phase, COVID-19 vaccine will be offered to individuals in specific priority groups:

- Phase 1A includes healthcare workers, residents and staff of long-term care facilities, and first responders.
- Phase 1B will include people at significantly higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness.
- Phase 2 will include people in critical infrastructure roles, including essential non-healthcare and transportation workers, and people at moderately higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness.
- Phase 3 will be wide-scale distribution of vaccine to the general population of the state.

In this phased approach, vaccine will be offered to individuals in each priority group before progressing to the next phase. The timeline for progressing to Phase 3 (general population) will depend on how quickly mass quantities of vaccine are available and completion of vaccination of higher priority groups.

With the holidays approaching, health officials encourage Marylanders to celebrate at home with members of their household. Yesterday, Governor Larry Hogan issued an emergency order requiring Marylanders to limit all travel to essential purposes only. All Marylanders who do travel outside of Maryland or any individuals who do travel to Maryland must either obtain a negative COVID-19 test result or self-quarantine for 10 days. This applies to all states, with the exception of Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, DC.

The CDC offers the following guidance for modifying your holiday celebrations this year to connect with friends and family safely:

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- Celebrate virtually (via phone or video conferencing) with loved ones who do not live in your household.
- Travel increases your chance of spreading and getting COVID-19. CDC continues to recommend postponing travel and staying home. This is the best way to protect yourself and others this year.
- Attending virtual services is the safest way to worship. CDC offers considerations to help communities of faith decide how best to practice their beliefs while keeping their staff and congregations safe.
- As always, wear a mask, practice good hand hygiene, stay at least six feet away from others, frequently clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces, and avoid large gatherings and crowded spaces.

Visit the CDC winter holidays page at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/winter.html> to learn more about how to have safer holiday celebrations.

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