

Update - COVID-19 Prevention Strategies in Schools

July 29, 2021

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has fully adopted updated Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) masking recommendations to protect against COVID-19 and the Delta variant. CDC recommends that everyone, including fully vaccinated individuals, wear a mask in public indoor setting in areas with substantial and high transmission.

While data continue to show the effectiveness of the three COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized in the U.S., including against the Delta variant, we are still seeing the virus rapidly spread among the unvaccinated.

Cases and hospitalizations due to COVID-19 both continue to increase in the region and now categorized as “substantial” transmission, overwhelmingly among the unvaccinated, but the risk is greater for everyone if we do not stop the ongoing spread of the virus and the Delta variant.

The data show the Delta variant is much more contagious and spreads more than twice as easily from one person to another compared to other strains. According to CDC, the Delta variant is causing some vaccine breakthrough infections, but even so, most breakthrough infections are mild, and the vaccines are preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death.

We know masking can help prevent transmission of COVID-19 and its variants. Until more people are vaccinated, **Will County Health Department (WCHD) is strongly recommending universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools and daycare facilities, regardless of the vaccination status.**

WCHD will continue to monitor community data (e.g., vaccination rate, positivity rate, cases per 100,000, etc.) as well as examine the recommendations from the CDC/IDPH, in order to revise our recommendations.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact WCHD Communicable Disease Program by calling 815-727-8481.