

# COVID-19 BRIEFING

Updates on COVID-19 in Idaho



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH & WELFARE

Dec. 31, 2020

Welcome to the Department of Health and Welfare's bi-weekly briefing on the department's latest news, communications activities, and resources for the pandemic. New in this edition of the newsletter is DHW's estimated vaccination timeline, information on Ct values and COVID-19 testing, and the latest COVID-19 statistics as well as DHW's response to misinformation seen on social media and elsewhere.

## COVID-19 VACCINE

Shipments of COVID-19 vaccine from Pfizer and Moderna are arriving in Idaho each week. Healthcare workers and residents of long-term care facilities are getting the vaccine first. Healthcare workers started getting vaccinated the week of Dec. 14. Residents and staff of long-term care facilities started getting vaccinated this week.

To see an estimated timeline for when Idahoans in other priority groups may receive the vaccine, please visit the [coronavirus website](#). For more information on the rollout of the vaccine in Idaho, see DHW's [press release](#) published Dec. 30.

## COVID-19 VACCINE FAQ

DHW created a comprehensive [COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ](#) on the coronavirus website. The FAQ will be regularly updated as information becomes available.

## IDAHO COVID-19 VACCINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CVAC)

At its next regularly scheduled meeting on Jan. 8, CVAC is set to continue discussing COVID-19 vaccine subgroup prioritizations. Information about CVAC and its meetings is on the [coronavirus website](#).

## COVID-19 STATISTICS

As of Dec. 31, 13,686 vaccine doses have been administered in Idaho. Data will be updated by 10 a.m. daily on the [coronavirus website](#).

As of Dec. 31, there have been 139,864 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and a total of 1,403 COVID-19-related deaths in Idaho. COVID-19 is now the third leading cause of death in Idaho this year.

Over the past week, the counties seeing the highest COVID-19 infection rates in Idaho include Adams, Caribou, and Boundary. Those counties have been seeing 7-day moving average incident rates of 126.4, 69.9, and 58.3 per 100,000 people respectively.

COVID-19 statistics can be found at the [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). Case data is updated daily at 5 p.m., hospitalization data is updated Monday, Wednesday and Friday by 5 p.m. and percent positivity testing data is updated by 5 p.m. MT Thursdays.

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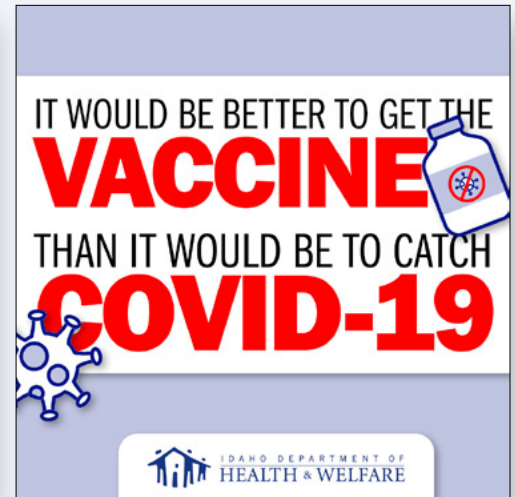
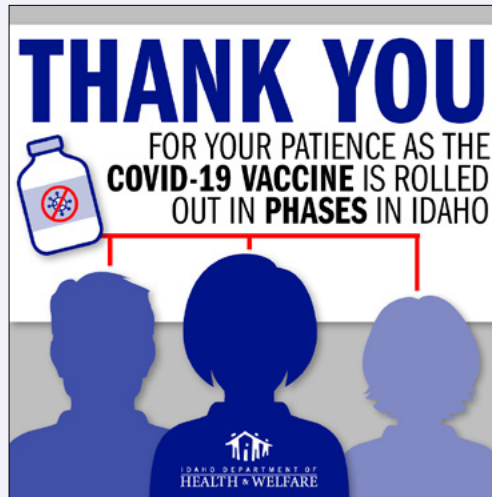
### GOVERNOR'S ACTIONS

Idaho remains in modified Stage 2 of the Idaho Rebounds reopening plan after Gov. Brad Little's [latest health order](#), announced on Nov. 14. Visit [Idaho Rebounds plan](#) for more information.

### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE (DHW) SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

DHW's social media campaigns in recent weeks have focused on COVID-19 vaccine. Posts have communicated information about vaccine safety, timelines for vaccination as well as corrections to misinformation about the vaccine.

Social media campaigns encouraging Idahoans to wear masks and follow recommended precautions as well as one with guidelines for gathering safely during the holidays are ongoing. Be sure to follow DHW on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram for the latest.



### DHW COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

DHW's [communications toolkit](#) contains social media tiles, digital posters, and flyers aimed at keeping Idahoans safe from the spread of COVID-19. The toolkit also contains information on how COVID-19 vaccines work, tips on how to find credible vaccine information, resources related to COVID-19 vaccine safety and monitoring, as well as COVID-19 vaccine-related social media tiles.

The materials are for healthcare providers, businesses, and other interested stakeholders, and they can be branded or adapted for social media campaigns and other forms of outreach. The toolkit will be updated regularly so check back for new content.

### COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION ONLINE

There is a new [COVID-19 vaccine section](#) available at the [coronavirus website](#). On the home page, scroll down to the first box that says "Idaho's COVID-19 Vaccine." The section includes some of the above information as well as an estimated timeline for when Idahoans may be able to get the vaccine, information about the process to prioritize groups for COVID-19 vaccine, links to COVID-19 vaccine blog posts, and a schedule of meeting dates for the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) as well as Idaho's COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee (CVAC).

There is also a link available with [resources for COVID-19 vaccine providers](#).



### SCHOOLS

The summary of COVID-19 cases associated with schools in Idaho at the [coronavirus website](#) is published on Mondays under the [“Schools” tab](#).

### LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

The summary of COVID-19 cases associated with long-term care facilities in Idaho at the [coronavirus website](#) is published on Fridays under the [“Long-Term Care” tab](#).

### CRISIS STANDARDS OF CARE

At an emergency meeting Dec. 11, the Board of DHW approved a [temporary administrative rule](#) that allows for the timely activation of crisis standards of care during a pandemic, natural disaster, or other emergency that is overwhelming Idaho’s healthcare system.

Crisis standards of care are guidelines that help healthcare providers and healthcare systems decide how to deliver the best care possible under the extraordinary circumstances of a disaster.

For more information about crisis standards of care, visit DHW’s [FAQ](#) and read the [press release](#) from DHW after the meeting.

### BUSTING COVID-19 MYTHS

**MYTH:** The COVID-19 vaccine will give you Bell’s palsy, a condition marked by a sudden weakness in facial muscles.

**FACT:** Four people participating in the Pfizer BioNTech and three people participating in the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials developed Bell’s palsy, according to safety data released by the manufacturers. The rate of the condition among clinical trial participants over three months is lower than the annual rate in the general population. Every year, about 40,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with Bell’s palsy. In large trials involving tens of thousands of people like these, experts say it is not uncommon for some participants to get sick with conditions unrelated to the vaccine.

**MYTH:** There’s no reason to get the vaccine if I’ve already had COVID-19

**FACT:** Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that reinfection with COVID-19 is possible, it is recommended that people get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they were infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. People who were recently infected may defer vaccination until 90 days after they were infected, if desired. Individuals who previously received passive antibody therapy (monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma) for COVID-19 should defer being vaccinated for at least 90 days after receipt of therapy to avoid possible interference with the vaccine.

At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from the virus after they’ve been infected. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long.

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## COVID-19 HELP NOW PHONE LINE

Since its inception in August, the Idaho Strong COVID Help Now emotional support line has answered 1,376 calls, texts, and chat messages from Idahoans who are struggling with the impacts of COVID-19. The Idaho Strong program also has a presence on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Be sure to check out the Mindfulness Mondays posts for tips on how you can take care of your emotional health during times of stress.

## CT VALUES AND COVID-19 TESTING

DWH has received many questions about Ct values and COVID-19 testing. Below are answers to those questions.

### What is a Real-Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR)?

One of the most common ways to detect SARS-Cov-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is a test called Real-Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR). RT-PCR is a method that amplifies SARS-CoV-2 genetic material in a sample to a level that is detectable using multiple rounds of copying.

### What is a Ct Value?

A Ct value is a number that signifies how many rounds of copying are needed to get a detectable amount of SARS-Cov-2 genetic material.

### Do all COVID-19 tests generate a Ct Value?

No.

### Can a Ct Value determine how infectious a person is?

No.

### Can I compare a Ct Value from one test method to another?

No.

Visit the [coronavirus website](#) for more information.

## COMMUNICATIONS FORUM

DHW's Office of Communications in partnership with the Gov. Brad Little's communications director created a forum for communications professionals in state agencies, health districts, healthcare agencies and facilities, and stakeholders to meet every other Monday to discuss COVID-19-related communications efforts and strategies. The next meeting is on Jan. 4. If you'd like to join send an email to [communications@dhw.idaho.gov](mailto:communications@dhw.idaho.gov).



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