

# COVID-19 BRIEFING

Updates on COVID-19 in Idaho



Jan. 15, 2021

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 briefing is the latest information on priority groups and timeline for the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, DHW's new COVID-19 vaccine dashboard, the governor's latest COVID-19-related actions, weekly media briefings, and more.

## COVID-19 VACCINE

Idaho to date has received 155,175 doses of COVID-19 vaccine, including the ones sent to the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program. Moving forward, Idaho is expected to receive roughly 20,950 doses each week.

Healthcare workers and residents and staff of long-term care facilities are currently getting the vaccine as part of the first phase of the rollout, which began Dec. 14. Expected to begin in February, the next phase includes frontline critical infrastructure (essential) workers and adults aged 65 and above. Future phases have not yet been determined.

To see an estimated timeline for when Idahoans may get vaccinated, visit the [coronavirus website](#).

## COVID-19 STATISTICS

As of Jan. 15, 41,424 people have received at least one dose of vaccine in Idaho. A total of 9,739 people have received both doses.



As of Jan. 14, there have been 153,358 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and a total of 1,591 COVID-19-related deaths in Idaho.

Over the past week, the counties seeing the highest COVID-19 infection rates in Idaho include Kootenai, Boundary, and Valley. Those counties have been seeing 7-day moving average incident rates of 77.5, 70, and 69 per 100,000 people respectively.

COVID-19 statistics can be found on 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.

# BRIEFING

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### COVID-19 VACCINE DATA DASHBOARD

Launched this week, the new [COVID-19 Vaccine Data Dashboard](#) includes COVID-19 vaccinations by county and public health district, cumulative doses administered, trend data and more. Additional data may be added in the future. The dashboard updates every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

### GOVERNOR'S ACTIONS

Gov. Brad Little on Jan. 12 announced the next phase of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Idaho includes frontline essential workers and adults 65 years of age and older. There will be three waves of vaccination in this phase as follows:

Starting on Jan. 12, first responders (firefighters/police) and safety (protective services/community support), education: pre-K-12 staff and teachers and daycare (childcare) workers, and correctional and detention facility staff not already included as healthcare personnel.

Starting early February, adults 65 years of age and older can get vaccinated.

Starting mid-February, the vaccine will be available to food and agriculture workers (including food processing workers and USDA processing plant inspectors as well as grocery, convenience store, and food pantry workers), Idaho National Guard not already included as healthcare personnel, manufacturing workers, public transit workers, and U.S. Postal Service workers.

For more information on priority groups and timing see DHW's updated vaccination [timeline](#).

Gov. Little outlined his policy and budget priorities in his 2021 State of the State and Budget Address on Monday, January 11. To help in the ongoing pandemic response, the governor's budget bolsters Idaho's public health infrastructure. He is recommending funds to increase nursing capacity and address the shortage of physicians across Idaho. He is also proposing to put more than \$250 million toward our homestretch efforts to finish the fight against COVID-19.

Available is the [full text](#) of the governor's speech, a [news release](#) following the speech, a [fact sheet](#) on the governor's "Building Idaho's Future" plan to use Idaho's record budget surplus for tax relief and strategic infrastructure investments, and a summary of the governor's FY22 [budget highlights](#).

Idaho remains in [modified Stage 2](#) of the Idaho Rebounds reopening plan. Visit the [Idaho Rebounds website](#) for more information.

### DHW WEEKLY MEDIA BRIEFINGS ON COVID-19 VACCINE

DHW has hosted weekly media briefings about COVID-19 vaccine every Tuesday at 2:30 p.m. since Jan. 5. The remote events have included updates from Gov. Little and DHW officials, followed by a question-and-answer session with members of the media.

For more information about the briefings see a [press release](#) published by Gov. Little's office. [Recordings](#) of past media briefings are posted on the coronavirus website.

# BRIEFING

## Updates on COVID-19 in Idaho



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HEALTH & WELFARE

### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

DHW's social media campaigns continue to focus on COVID-19 vaccine. New campaigns provide information about COVID-19 vaccine side effects/reactions, the timeline for vaccination, and vaccine safety. Another campaign is focused on busting myths about COVID-19 vaccine.

Social media campaigns asking Idahoans to choose to wear masks and follow recommended precautions are ongoing.



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

At its most recent meeting on Jan. 8, CVAC recommended to Gov. Brad Little changes to the second phase of COVID-19 vaccination in Idaho. CVAC recommended that phase include frontline critical infrastructure (essential) workers and individuals 65 years of age or older. Gov. Little ultimately adopted a modified version of this recommendation, which is outlined above.

CVAC's next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 22. Information about CVAC and its meetings is on the [coronavirus website](#).



### 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. Recent additions to the toolkit include flyers on DHW's COVID Help Now Line in both English and Spanish. 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.



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HEALTH & WELFARE

### COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION ONLINE

The new [COVID-19 vaccine section](#) on the coronavirus website is updated daily. The page includes a comprehensive COVID-19 FAQ that is updated weekly, information on priority groups for the vaccine, the estimated timeline for when Idahoans can get the vaccine, recordings of DHW's media briefings, 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), among other resources.

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](#). This week, however, it will be published on Friday because of the MLK Jr. holiday on Monday.

### 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](#).

### BUSTING COVID-19 MYTHS

**MYTH:** COVID-19 vaccines can't be trusted because they were rushed.

**FACT:** COVID-19 vaccines go through the same rigorous testing for safety and effectiveness, review, and approval process as other vaccines. Because pharmaceutical companies began manufacturing the vaccine during the clinical trials, they were able to make the vaccines available as soon as they were authorized.

**MYTH:** COVID-19 vaccines will likely give you serious side effects

**FACT:** COVID-19 vaccines can cause mild side effects, including injection site pain or swelling, muscle pain, headaches, or mild to moderate fevers that should go away in a few days. These are normal signs the body is producing an immune response.



### DHW BLOG

The [DHW blog](#) features a new blog twice a week. The latest one is a Q&A with state epidemiologist Dr. Christine Hahn on where to get a vaccine, new virus strain, and vaccine side effects.

# BRIEFING

## Updates on COVID-19 in Idaho



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### CORONAVIRUS WORKING GROUP

The Coronavirus Working Group, which advises Gov. Little on pandemic-related issues, at its most recent meeting recommended the following policy that has since been approved by Gov. Little:

In K-12 instruction areas where there is close contact between a person who has tested positive for, or is diagnosed with, COVID-19 (case) and students or staff (contact) and both the case and the contact were wearing masks during the time physical distancing could not be maintained:

- The case must isolate at home as recommended by public health officials.
- The contact may attend in-person classes but must monitor themselves closely for COVID-19 symptoms during the two weeks after exposure. If they develop symptoms, they should stay home and contact a healthcare provider.
- Students or staff who are close contacts due to an exposure outside of instruction areas are still required to self-quarantine.

### NEW VIRUS VARIANT

DHW is aware that the new variant of the virus that causes COVID-19 has been reported in the U.S. Idaho Public Health officials and testing laboratories are watching for the variant virus, but it has not been detected yet. Nonetheless, we think it's probably here, as it is in some nearby states.

The Idaho public health laboratory is participating in a national Strain Surveillance project and is routinely sending COVID positive samples to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for sequencing to monitor for new variants. In addition, our public health laboratory also has the capacity to perform gene sequencing of the virus and will be bringing on that capability as soon as possible this year, to provide additional monitoring for mutations in the SARS-CoV-2 genome in Idaho.

At this point, our work to vaccinate healthcare workers and residents and staff in long-term care facilities continues. The expectation of experts is that based on the mutations, the currently available vaccines should still be very effective against this strain.

### COVID-19 TESTING UPDATE

A total of \$3 million in federal CARES Act funds have been allocated to locations statewide to enhance testing capacity. DHW has purchased 165,138 Vault saliva-based PCR tests, and the state has received 343,720 of the 530,000 Abbott BinaxNOW antigen tests allocated by the federal government. The tests are being distributed to schools, public health districts, federally qualified health centers, primary care clinics, tribes, and hospitals.

### 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 Feb. 1. If you'd like to join send an email to [communications@dhw.idaho.gov](mailto:communications@dhw.idaho.gov).