

The Numbers in L.A. County

The [7-day average of daily new cases in L.A. County](#) was at a low point of 162 on June 3rd, rising to 432 by July 5th and then 851 as of July 13th. Test positivity and hospitalizations have also been rising but more slowly.

There are just over 8 million people in L.A. County who are 16 years of age or older who can be vaccinated for COVID. [As of data through July 9th](#), 69% of these persons have had at least one dose of vaccine and 61% were fully vaccinated. Full vaccination is what you need for the best protection against the Delta variant but even partial vaccination is better than no vaccination.

Revised CDC Guidance for K-12 Schools

The [CDC issued revised guidance](#) on 7/9/2021 to support the full reopening of K-12 schools in the fall even if those schools cannot implement all of the CDC prevention recommendations. They are recommending “[layered protection](#)”, using combinations of distancing, masking, surveillance testing, enhanced ventilation, contact tracing, isolation, quarantine and vaccination to make these education settings as safe as possible while still making in-person education accessible to all students. Schools are asked to rely on advice from their local Public Health Departments in making decisions about when to tighten or relax prevention measures based on local conditions.

The CDC points to multiple studies showing that transmission rates in schools implementing multiple prevention strategies are typically lower than or no higher than the transmission rate of their surrounding community. Children are making up a greater proportion of all COVID cases as more adults have been vaccinated, 14% now as compared to 7% a year ago. Hospitalization rates are still low at $\leq 2\%$ and deaths are $< 0.03\%$ of all child COVID cases.

With the 7-day average of daily new cases of 851 as of 7/13/2021, L.A. County has a “substantial” transmission rate based on [CDC criteria](#). That transmission rate will be considered “high” at a sustained 7-day average of $> 1,450$ new cases per day.

The California Department of Health and Human Services announced that the K-12 school year this fall will start with [all students and teachers wearing masks](#) regardless of vaccination status with enforcement decisions being left to local school districts.

Discussion of Booster Doses for Pfizer

[Pfizer met](#) with Dr. Fauci, Dr. Rochelle Wallensky of the CDC, the director of the National Institutes of Health, the acting commissioner of the FDA and several other U.S. officials on 7/12/2021 to make their case for recommending a booster dose for their COVID vaccine. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices COVID-19 work group has been recommending that booster doses begin only after evidence of declining vaccine efficacy against illness and signs that variants have substantially altered vaccine protection. Pfizer says it has internal data to document falling antibody titers at 6-8 months after vaccination. They also point to a report from Israel that Pfizer efficacy for preventing asymptomatic and mild

symptomatic disease was [64% as of June 6th](#) although the efficacy for preventing hospitalization and severe illness was still well above 90%. Half of the small number of patients currently hospitalized in Israel for severe COVID are fully vaccinated. The majority of those have underlying conditions that increase their risk for severe disease. Israel has announced that all persons fully vaccinated with Pfizer who also have immunodeficiency will be given a third dose.

France has studied Pfizer booster doses in a small number of [solid organ transplant patients](#). Almost half of the patients who had no detectable antibody level after their second dose of Pfizer had a measurable antibody response after a booster dose. Transplant patients with measurable though low antibody level after 2 doses had a many times higher antibody level after a 3rd dose.

There will be more questions to answer. We know that antibody levels are not our only tool for preventing COVID infection but we don't know how much help we are getting from cellular immunity. There is also the question of whether repeated boosting of an immune response in a solid organ transplant patient might increase the risk for [organ rejection](#). There are many in the U.S. and around the world who believe that there is more to be gained for all in defeating the pandemic by focusing vaccine doses on the unvaccinated around the world and in the U.S. rather than promoting a wide use of booster doses.

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