



**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

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## **Health Department Provides COVID Updates, Trends, and Resources**

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN – The Hamilton County Health Department is notifying residents of recent trends in the local COVID pandemic.

- 21-30 year olds account for 25% of the daily new cases.
- New cases among the 11-20 year old age group are trending up from last week
- The highest case counts per day remain in the zip codes 37343 (Hixson/Middle Valley), 37363 (Ooltewah/Collegedale), and 37421 (East Brainerd), while cases in the 37415 (Red Bank) and 37379 (Soddy-Daisy/Lakesite) zip codes are trending upward.

Health Department epidemiology investigations have revealed factors that are contributing to the increase in COVID transmission in certain settings:

### **Household transmission**

- The disease is easily spread within a household when one of the members becomes infected. Effort should be made to isolate sick individuals and ensure that they and other household members wear masks, even within the house. Ensure constant air exchange, keep surfaces disinfected, and eliminate overlap in bathroom and food preparation areas, if possible.

### **Workplace transmission**

- Workplaces with high transmission rates are not practicing safe distancing (6 feet or more) or not properly wearing masks around coworkers. Employers are urged to examine every facet of their operations to reduce transmission and educate employees on how to properly wear masks (fully covering the nose and mouth). Businesses are strongly encouraged to require masks for everyone on their premises.

### **Large gatherings**

- Events such as weddings and parties are consistently sources of transmission. Every effort should be made to plan these events for very small numbers of guests or postpone until a future date. For example, an officiant can conduct the marriage, while the larger ceremony and reception could be held in the future.

### **Social establishments**

- Bars where people are tightly packed and not wearing masks are responsible for virus transmission. According to guidance in the Tennessee Pledge, an establishment's "venue capacity" should be determined by the ability of patrons to be 6 feet apart, along with other considerations found [here](#).

### **Sports/Extracurricular activities**

- While transmission does occur among spectators, the bulk of these cases are occurring among the athletes themselves. Coaches and directors should ensure that athletes are at least 6 feet apart during all phases of practice, such as waiting to run drills and while having team discussions. Athletes should not be gathered closely together on the sidelines during games. More detailed [sports guidance can be found in the Tennessee Pledge and TSSAA's Return to Play](#).

In general, behaviors contributing to the recent high infection rate in all settings are:

- Lack of appropriate and proper mask wearing
- Lack of social distancing (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes)
- Large and small gatherings without precautions
- Family spread
- Continuing to leave home while ill or awaiting test results
- Pandemic fatigue
- Cooler weather and shorter days, with more time spent indoors

"The only way to stop this upward trend is for everyone to take the recommended actions," said Health Department Administrator Becky Barnes, "This includes every coach and athlete, every employer and manager, every bar owner and patron, and anyone planning an event. By thinking of how we can protect others, we actually protect ourselves."

### **The best way to protect others and yourself are:**

- If you have any symptoms, regardless of how mild they may seem, do not leave home or attend any gatherings. Leave the house only to seek medical care or to get tested for COVID-19.
- Wear a facemask in public and around people who do not live in your household. A facemask should cover both the nose and the mouth.
- Practice social distancing - put six feet of distance between yourself and people who don't live in your household.
- Wash your hands often.
- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.

### **COVID-19 Testing**

- Health Department COVID-19 testing numbers have increased. The Health Department tests over 800 individuals daily at the Alstom Plant Monday through Friday and over 550 individuals on both Saturday and Sunday.
- Free Health Department drive-through COVID testing is available 7 days a week at the Alstom Plant site from 8:30AM to 1:00PM. Free transportation is available by calling (423) 209-8383. *Everyone in the car should be wearing a mask, whether they are in the same household or not, and whether they are getting tested or not.*
- Information about other community testing sites around Hamilton County can be found on the Health Department's [website](#) or by calling the hotline at (423) 209-8383.