



Public Information Release

COVID-19 Cases Rising, Variants Detected

April 13, 2021

Cases of COVID-19 in Madison County are on the rise again according to Madison County Public Health. Public health data shows that case incidence in the county has more than doubled in the last two weeks. On April 1 Madison County was averaging 26 new cases per week. As of April 13, the county is averaging 55 new cases per week. According to Madison County Health Commissioner Chris Cook, this type of rapid increase has not been seen in the county since November 15 which was right before the winter surge. "This increase might be from Spring Break and Easter activities but we are starting to see evidence of a sustained increase again," Cook said. "Our case incidence is higher than most of our neighboring counties."

But it is more than just the number of cases that is concerning to Cook. The people getting sick from COVID-19 right now are younger than at any time during the pandemic. The average age of a case in Madison County has been 45 dating back to March 2020. During the month of April the average age has been 34. Cook also reports that in the last week pediatric cases have rapidly increased. "We are seeing a sizeable jump in the 0-19 year old age group right now," Cook said. Over the course of the last year, 6% of all cases in the county have been in the 0-19 age group. Since April 1, 26% of all new cases have been age 0-19; furthermore, in the last week 30% of all new cases have been in this young age group. "With more adults vaccinated we would expect a shift in the age group affected. But the combination of our increased case incidence and one out of every three new cases age 19 or younger is worrisome," he said.

Further complicating the situation is the discovery of multiple COVID-19 variants in the county. This month at least seven cases of COVID-19 have been on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's list of "variants of concern." This includes six cases of the B.1.1.7 variant, called the UK strain, and one case of the B.1.429 variant, known as the California strain. Studies of both variants show significant evidence that they can be passed from person to person much more easily; however, there are conflicting studies about the severity of disease the variants can cause. "Only a small number of COVID-19 cases are tested for the type of variant that caused the illness. But we know that the variants are in Madison County and across Ohio and are spreading easily," Cook said. "While the vaccines do a good job of protecting us from the variants, these new strains have the capability of pushing us into another surge if we are not very careful."

Cook says that things can still stay under control if more people get vaccinated and everyone stays vigilant. But it will not be easy. Madison County Public Health has invested a significant amount of time and resources into their vaccination clinic at OSU's Molly Caren Agricultural Center. As case numbers rise, an already overtaxed public health system will be pushed to the limit again. "We will continue to vaccinate, isolate cases, and quarantine contacts. Public Health will always answer the call, but we are once again asking for everyone's help," Cook said. The Health Commissioner is asking everyone to do four things right now: 1) Wear your mask the right way (over your mouth and nose), 2) Keep gatherings small, 3) Move indoor activities outside, and 4) Get your vaccine from Madison County Public Health. Everyone age 16 and older can get a free COVID-19 vaccine. Visit covidvaccine.madisonph.org to pre-register and view clinic times.

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