



Public Information Release

Updated Public Health Advisories and Orders December 24, 2020

With the expected increase in COVID-19 cases across Ohio following the holidays, Madison County Health Commissioner Chris Cook has extended two public health advisories and one public health order until the end of January.

A public health advisory was issued on December 2 to all schools in Madison County recommending that they close their school buildings until January 1, 2021. Schools that open must meet the six (6) foot social distancing rule between students/staff not of the same household and follow all other local and state safety operational guidelines. This advisory and safety guidelines have been extended until January 31, 2021.

Another public health advisory was issued on December 2 to all schools, sports teams, and related organizations in Madison County recommending that they suspend all school sports, club sports, travel sports, league sports, school extracurriculars, and school activities until January 1, 2021. Sports and extracurriculars that continue must meet all local and state safety operational guidelines. This advisory has also been extended until January 31, 2021.

The order suspending all community festivals, events and gatherings until January 1 has been extended to January 31.

Madison County remains at Level 3 (red) and continues to experience high incidence of COVID-19 spread on the Ohio Public Health Advisory System (OPHAS). On December 3 the county was placed on the watch list for escalating to Level 4 (purple) for one week. According to Health Commissioner Cook, COVID-19 cases peaked in Madison County on December 9. "This was two weeks after students were last exposed to each other in school and also two weeks after Thanksgiving. We expected that peak," he said. Since that time cases have decreased. "We've seen a 15% decrease in the number of new cases. It's still very high, but we aren't currently seeing that day after day exponential growth that pushed us to the brink of Level 4," Cook reports.

Cook noted that there are many factors that may be contributing to the current leveling-off of cases. But it was clear to him that something made a difference. "I believe our population-based decisions are partially responsible," he said of the decrease in cases following the advisories and orders he and the Board of Health put in place. "We knew that interventions were needed. We had the highest case incidence in our region. Now we are 6th among our neighbors in case incidence. With the help of our residents, we changed where we were headed," Cook said. If history repeats itself following the upcoming holidays in Ohio, there will be a surge in cases for several weeks into the new year. Cook said that having vaccine is a powerful tool against COVID-19 but it will not make a significant difference for several more months. "This fight isn't over. I know we are all tired, but we need to keep pushing forward by wearing masks, distancing, and not gathering with people outside our households."

Get your news from trustworthy sources during the pandemic. For daily updates, please visit covid.madisonph.org and coronavirus.ohio.gov.

Chris Cook, MPH, RS
Health Commissioner

Dr. James Kaehr, MD
Medical Director

Madison County Public Health
306 Lafayette Street, Suite B, PO Box 467
London, Ohio 43140 | Fax 740-852-5418



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