

Gov. Beshear: COVID-19 Cases Declining as More Kentuckians Get Vaccinated

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 4, 2021) – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear said weekly COVID-19 cases and test positivity rates, as well as COVID-19 hospitalizations, ICU admittances, ventilator uses and orders for monoclonal antibody treatments in the commonwealth, are declining due to more Kentuckians getting vaccinated and masking up indoors.

While declining cases are encouraging, Gov. Beshear and health care leaders at King's Daughters Medical Center (KDMC) in Ashland said Kentuckians need to stay vigilant about protecting themselves from the virus days after the United States' COVID-19 death toll surpassed 700,000.

"Overall, today's report is positive in the trends, but what is still really hard is the loss of life we continue to see, and that loss being preventable," said Gov. Beshear. "This is going to be a scar that the American people carry with us moving forward. That's why we need to make sure the cases are not only dropping, but dropping at a significant rate. We need to accelerate the trend."

"The things we're seeing now are not what I ever expected," said Danielle Sexton, COVID unit nurse manager at King's Daughters Medical Center (KDMC). "Death and dying are a part of nursing, unfortunately, but not to this extent. I mean, this is just extreme right now."

"At least 95% of my patients that walk out of here or, sadly, that don't make it, have said to me: 'I wish I would've gotten vaccinated,'" said Carly Thomas, RN, COVID unit nurse at KDMC. "I think that we should trust science a little more than we are and stop making this so political, because it is killing people."

"In the emergency room, we're packed full. There are days when there are 20 to 30 people out in the lobby waiting for a bed. We're trying our best to prioritize the patients that need to be seen," said Rebecca Harper, RN, emergency room nurse at KDMC. "People are not getting vaccinated for COVID, they're not social distancing and not wearing their mask and they're coming in sicker than I've ever seen before. It's emotionally draining when you see people that are young, that you know would've lived a full life if they just made a different decision and maybe would've gotten the vaccine. People who look at you and are smothering essentially, and they literally say, 'If I could've done anything differently, I would've gotten the vaccine.'"

"With this surge, the patients are typically younger," said Tiffany Waggoner, RN, emergency room nurse at KDMC. "Should someone be on the ventilator for this amount of time, when would they want to come off of it or when would we want to transition to comfort care?" These are the talks that we're having with families right now that are hard. Unfortunately, we're not seeing them come off the ventilator to live life afterwards."

From March 1 to Sept. 29, 86.2% of COVID-19 cases, 92.4% of COVID-19 hospitalizations and 84.5% of COVID-19 deaths in Kentucky have been among those who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.

The Governor reported that 61% of all Kentuckians, including those that are too young to be eligible, have gotten at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose; 71% of Kentuckians 12 or older, or 71%, of all eligible Kentuckians, have gotten at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose; and 74% of Kentucky adults have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose.

Kentucky ranks third among neighboring states for the percent of residents 12 or older who have received at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine; the percent of residents 65 and older who have received at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine; and the percent of residents 12 and older who are fully vaccinated.

Pregnant Kentuckians Strongly Encouraged to Get Vaccinated

Gov. Beshear said pregnant Kentuckians are strongly encouraged to get a COVID-19 vaccine. As of Sept. 27, 2021, 125,000 pregnant Americans have tested positive for COVID-19; 22,000 have been hospitalized; 161 have died; and 97% of those hospitalized were unvaccinated.

Vaccine Booster and Expanded Approval Update

The Governor said on Oct. 14-15, a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advisory committee will discuss booster doses of Moderna and Janssen COVID-19 vaccines. On Oct. 26, the FDA anticipates the advisory committee will discuss authorizing the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5-11.

Gov. Beshear reminded Kentuckians that Pfizer vaccine booster eligible occupations at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission previously detailed by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention include:

- First responders (health care, firefighters, police, congregate care);
- Education (teachers, professors, support staff, day care workers);
- Food and agriculture workers;
- Manufacturing workers;
- Corrections workers;
- U.S. Postal Service workers;
- Public transit workers; and
- Grocery store workers.

kynect State-Based Exchange Opens Nov. 1, Offering Access to Quality Health Coverage

Taking another major step forward in his commitment to provide quality health care to Kentuckians, Gov. Beshear announced kynect, the state-based health insurance exchange, will reopen Nov. 1, 2021. It will provide Kentuckians easier access to health coverage and other benefits, all on one convenient platform at kynect.ky.gov. To learn more, see the full release.

"Quality health care is a basic human right – and never has that need been more evident than during the COVID-19 global health pandemic," said Gov. Beshear. "Kentucky's economy has caught fire, and we've just landed the largest economic investment in the state's history, but we can't succeed in building a better Kentucky if our people are not healthy and ready to work. kynect was a lifesaver for so many when it was first offered in 2013, and we're excited to work with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to bring it back and make sure all Kentuckians can easily access the health plans and benefits they deserve."

Essential Worker Hero Bonus

Gov. Beshear said for nearly two years, Kentuckians on the frontlines of this pandemic have worked tirelessly to save lives and ensure critical needs were met for families.

"Despite the dangers, they still showed up. From health care heroes to first responders to grocery store workers and educators, the bravery and dedication of these essential workers has remained strong," said the Governor. "As we are on month 18, almost 19, of this pandemic, it's important to have something out there to continue to push them to move on, something to look forward to, something that you can call a reward or a hero bonus."

To honor the work essential workers have done and to encourage them to continue in their employment, in the next seven to 10 days, Gov. Beshear will send a recommendation and overall framework to the General Assembly to use \$400 million in upcoming American Rescue Plan Act funding for essential worker bonuses, for individuals who stay in their roles for at least two full years after the start of the pandemic in Kentucky, on March 6, 2020.

"This is something that when we send to the legislature, we are going to ask for cooperation and the formation of a working group that would include legislators, legislative staff, as well as executive branch staff, to go through the who and the how much to make sure that we do this right based on our experience and to make sure we hear from and listen to different groups, including legislators from what they have been seeing in their district," said Gov. Beshear.

Yards to Paradise Fall Preparation for Plantings Landscaping Column by Max Phelps

Many a landscape and garden chore can be done in the fall of the year. One of those is preparing for plantings that may not happen for weeks or even before spring.

Tilling, spading, or turning of soil in fall is a tried and true method of having an area ready to plant in spring. Incorporating some lime or minerals into the soil ahead of the actual planting time is usually a good thing, but it's not recommended to add nitrogen fertilizer ahead of time. Also, for areas that may erode and wash your loose soil away, fall tillage isn't recommended. Planting of cover crops makes sense in such circumstances, but will delay spring planting if it must be tilled into the soil. Things like barley or wheat can simply be mowed in spring and you can start planting in the stubble.

Those not planning to dig or till should consider other options to keep weeds and grass from growing in the spots they may wish to plant fruit trees, shade trees, or create a garden bed for early plantings.

For some, the solution is to let it be, and spray weed killer in spring and plant soon thereafter.

Organic or natural treatments of future planting locations could include some of these options, using materials that are easily available: Mulch—cover your future planting area with mulch. Compost—applied to a thickness to smother weeds and grass. Chopped up leaves and/or small limbs that have been through a shredder or chipper—such makes a fine soil conditioner and as the leaves and limbs decompose they add a lot of nutrients to the soil and rob very little nitrogen from your future trees or plants. Obviously if you have some manure, some greensand or Azomite or rock phosphate, these can be added either under or on top of the mulching material. Rain and snow will carry many of the nutrients deeper into the soil and condition it for greater workability and tilth in the coming years.

If you are doing your plantings this fall, it's possible you'll plant first and then add some of these treatments on top of your planted trees. Fall plantings of all larger shrubs and trees is highly recommended in our area—small plants not so much, as frost heaving may uproot them in winter.

Adding a couple other bits of advice you should note; don't put mulch or compost right up against the bark of your new plant, very little or no mulch should sit against the trunk of your new tree or bush.

And don't use any high-nitrogen or quick release fertilizers in the fall, save those applications until late winter or early spring when the sap begins rising and buds begin swelling in preparation for spring growth.

Fall treatments can encourage new growth or productivity from an old tree in many cases, too.

But, today's topic is to prepare now to plant later. Adding minerals and organic matter to cover your future planting spots helps condition the earth for a better planting experience. And it's easily raked aside when you get ready to dig holes and plant at a later time, this is especially helpful if you plan to plant dormant bare-rooted trees or shrubs in early spring.

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SCHOLARSHIPS

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HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS who plan to attend an accredited college or trade school in the fall of 2022 are invited to apply - **NO ESSAY REQUIRED!**

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