

SAN JUAN BASIN PUBLIC HEALTH
HEALTH DISTRICT FOR ARCHULETA AND LA PLATA COUNTIES
PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY: COVID-19 MITIGATION

March 1, 2022

Severe and highly transmissible variants of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) remain present and circulating in Archuleta and La Plata Counties, Colorado. **San Juan Basin Public Health (SJBPH) advises all residents and visitors to continue to take measures to protect themselves against COVID-19 when participating in indoor activities with people outside their household during elevated transmission or hospitalization metrics in the local community.**

I. INTRODUCTION

As of February 28, 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **list** both Archuleta and La Plata Counties as “high” risk communities for COVID-19 due to the combination of transmission rates, hospital admission rates, and hospital capacity. Vulnerable individuals and those not up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccinations are still at risk of developing serious cases of COVID-19.

The best protection against COVID-19 is to overlap multiple strategies to reduce infection. These strategies include staying up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccination (including booster shots when available and recommended), wearing a face covering when appropriate; maximizing indoor ventilation; holding social gatherings, organized events and business activities outside when possible; staying home when symptomatic or exposed, appropriate use of COVID-19 diagnostic and screening testing; and hand hygiene.

For the purposes of this Advisory, “Public Indoor Space” means any enclosed indoor area that is publicly or privately owned, managed, or operated to which individuals have access by right or by invitation, expressed or implied, and that is accessible to the public, serves as a place of employment, or is an entity providing services. Public Indoor Space does not mean a person’s residence, including a room in a motel or hotel or a residential room for students at an educational facility.

II. VACCINATION AND THERAPEUTICS

SJBPH advises that safe and highly effective vaccines against COVID-19 are now widely available in Archuleta and La Plata Counties for those 5 years of age and older. Booster vaccines are authorized and recommended for all persons who have completed their primary vaccine series and are over the age of twelve (Pfizer series) or eighteen (Moderna series or Johnson & Johnson). Evidence strongly suggests that booster shots provide significantly increased protection against the Omicron variant, which is dominant in Colorado.

SJBPH urges eligible unvaccinated individuals to get vaccinated as soon as possible, urges partially vaccinated people to complete their vaccination series, and urges eligible patients to receive a booster shot to maximize their level of protection. SJBPH strongly urges parents of an eligible child to fully vaccinate their child as soon as possible and to vaccinate their child with a booster shot when eligible. More information about boosters is available at **[this link](#)**.

SJBPH further advises that, because vaccination and booster shots continue to be effective at limiting severe illness and spread of infection and associated days of missed in-person work, employers should consider requiring all employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or to test weekly if unvaccinated.

Limited supplies of monoclonal antibody and antiviral treatments are now available in southwest Colorado. These treatments can help prevent severe illness for some people aged 12 years and older who get infected with COVID-19, have mild or moderate symptoms, and are at high risk of developing severe COVID-19 due to age or medical condition. People who meet these criteria should consult their physician and develop a plan for if they are exposed and/or test positive.

III. BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

SJBPH advises that business organizations, public institutions and special events should consider requiring employees, customers and/or guests to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, or to require a recent (less than 48 hours) negative test to be presented on entry. Widespread vaccination, combined with other mitigation strategies listed in sections IV and V below, continues to be the best approach to reduce the burden of disease in our community.

Employers are reminded that all employers in the state, regardless of size, are **required** to provide a supplement of up to 80 hours of COVID-related leave in 2022, including paid sick leave for getting the COVID-19 vaccine and recovering from side effects that prevent an employee from working, while a declared state public health emergency remains in effect. More information on this requirement is available at [this link](#).

IV. FACE COVERING

Evidence continues to suggest that consistently wearing a well-fitting, high-quality face covering, like a surgical mask or, especially, a KN95 or N95 respirator, is associated with lower likelihood of spreading or acquiring a COVID-19 infection. SJBPH urges vulnerable individuals and people who live with vulnerable individuals in Archuleta and La Plata Counties to wear a well-fitting, high-quality face covering while in a Public Indoor Space, unless the individual is two years of age or younger, or cannot medically tolerate a face covering, when the county they are in is listed as “Medium” risk or “High” risk by the CDC’s “COVID-19 community levels”, found at [this link](#). SJBPH further advises that when a county is listed as “High” risk by the CDC’s “COVID-19 community levels”, all individuals in that county should wear a well-fitting, high-quality face covering when in a Public Indoor Space.

The CDC and SJBPH continue to recommend that people with symptoms, people with a positive test who are out of their initial isolation period, and people with a confirmed exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask in Public Indoor Spaces. Information on masks and their proper use can be found at [this link](#) and [this link](#).

All individuals in La Plata and Archuleta Counties are reminded that at all “community levels,” people can wear a mask based on personal preference, informed by personal risk assessment and risk tolerance. A well-fitted KN95 or N95 respirator is the best additional protection for individuals who desire to maximize their level of protection while in a Public Indoor Space. High quality masks are available free of charge at SJBPH’s offices.

V. INDOOR SPACE MITIGATION MEASURES

SJBPH recommends that employers and business and event operators implement the following transmission control measures in Public Indoor Spaces:

- Monitoring symptoms in employees at the worksite or through employee self-assessment at home prior to coming to the worksite. If an employee reports any symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19, take all of the following steps:
 - Send employee home immediately;
 - Exclude employee until they are no longer contagious per public health guidance;

- Provide work accommodations for individuals at risk of severe illness from COVID-19, such as telecommuting;
- Consider requiring employees and customers to wear a well-fitting, high-quality face covering, especially if the establishment or event is poorly ventilated and/or the facility or event’s county is “High” risk according to the CDC’s “COVID-19 community levels,” found at [this link](#);
- Consider enabling remote work options, especially when the establishment or workplace’s county is “Medium” or “High” risk according to the CDC’s “COVID-19 community levels,” found at [this link](#);
- Improve ventilation of indoor spaces to the extent possible, according to CDC guidance available at [this link](#);
- Provide hand sanitizer and/or sinks with soap and hot water for customers and employees;
- Post signage for employees and customers on good hand hygiene and the requirement to wear well-fitting, high-quality face coverings, if implemented. Example signage is available at [this link](#).

VI. SCHOOLS AND CHILDCARE

Schools, childcare facilities, and extracurricular activities should exclude ill children, improve ventilation of indoor spaces, conduct operations outdoors, and emphasize hand hygiene to the extent possible, and should consider implementing screening testing strategies when their county is listed as “Medium” risk or “High” risk by the CDC’s “COVID-19 community levels,” found at [this link](#).

SJBPH further advises P-12 schools, childcare facilities (regardless of licensure status), and extracurricular activities to require face coverings for all persons in indoor school, childcare, and activity settings when the facility’s county is listed as “High” risk by the CDC’s “COVID-19 community levels”, in alignment with CDC guidance found at [this link](#) and [this link](#).

Schools, childcare facilities, and extracurricular activities are reminded that case and outbreak investigation may lead to further SJBPH recommendations in response to individual situations. COVID-19 remains a mandatory reportable condition under Colorado communicable disease regulations.

SJBPH advises the public that individuals who meet the CDC’s definition of a close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case while not up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccinations may be subject to quarantine requirements, in accordance with CDC exposure definitions and quarantine recommendations found at [this link](#).

SJBPH will continue to evaluate the prevalence and risks of COVID-19 in Archuleta and La Plata Counties and adjust or rescind this Advisory accordingly.

Issued at noon on March 1, 2022.

By:  _____

Liane Jollon, Executive Director, SJBPH