COVID-19 Vaccine (https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/find-vaccine/locations/index.jsp) – Find out when, where, and how to get your shot.

Vaccine Rewards (https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine-rewards/index.jsp) – Your shot to a safe summer. Claim your reward by June 30.

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As Hospitals Express Capacity Concerns, Governor Walz Announces New COVID-19 Restrictions

Restrictions apply to social settings identified as most significant sources of COVID-19 outbreaks; Walz also today announced funding to support small businesses affected by the pandemic

November 10, 2020

[ST. PAUL, MN] – As hospitals express concern about capacity to treat Minnesotans with COVID-19, Governor Tim Walz today announced new restrictions aimed at curbing the spread of the virus in Minnesota. Beginning on Friday, the restrictions will apply to social gatherings, celebrations and receptions, and bars and restaurants, which are three of the most significant sources of COVID-19 outbreaks across the state. Governor Walz also today announced $10 million in funding to support small businesses affected by the pandemic.

"Since the beginning of this pandemic, we've asked Minnesotans to make unprecedented sacrifices for the greater good. And they've done it. Because when times are tough, Minnesotans pull together," said Governor Walz. **"Each step of the way, we've followed the best data available. These targeted, science-based actions will help get the spread of the virus under control so that we can care for those who fall ill, get our kids in the classroom, keep our businesses open, and get back to the activities we love."**

At the beginning of the pandemic, the Governor asked Minnesotans to help slow the spread of the virus as hospitals built up capacity to ensure they could care for everyone who falls ill. That extra capacity is now being put to the test as the virus spreads quickly across the state, region, and country. More people are getting sick, including our health care workers, which is impacting hospitals' ability to provide care even when there are enough actual hospital beds. These factors have caused hospital bed capacity to hover above 95 percent in many areas.

In order to make effective decisions to control the spread of COVID-19, health officials need to understand who, when, and where this virus is spreading. Health officials, with guidance from the White House, have analyzed testing results and contact tracing data to understand how the virus is spreading throughout the state. The results show that the virus is being disproportionately spread by younger adults between the ages of 18-35. Because of this, social settings which attract a younger crowd are the most significant sources of COVID-19 spread in the state. In fact, over 70 percent of COVID-19 outbreaks in Minnesota from June to November have a direct link back to weddings, private social gatherings, and late nights at bars and restaurants.

"Most young people are taking great precautions to protect themselves and their community," the Governor continued. **"Most bars and restaurants have done a great job responding to the pandemic and keeping their customers and employees safe. But this virus is spreading like wildfire, and every gathering place is now more dangerous than it was a month ago."**

Starting this Friday, all bars and restaurants must end dine-in service between 10pm and 4am. Indoor capacity will be capped at 150 people, and may not exceed 50 percent of an establishment's total capacity. Bar counter service will be closed for seating and service in all establishments besides those that only have counter service. In counter-service only establishments, patrons can line up with masks and then return to their table. These restrictions follow research that shows these environments become more risky later in the evening.

Beginning on Friday there will also be a 10-person limit for indoor and outdoor gatherings, and all social gatherings will be limited to members of three households or less.

Capacity limits for receptions related to weddings, funerals, and similar events will be instituted through a phased approach, but will eventually lead to a 25-person cap. In addition, such receptions and similar events may not take place between 10pm and 4am.

All current restrictions also remain in effect. Since data has not shown a connection between religious services and the recent increase in outbreaks, there will be no change to religious services.

"Skyrocketing spread in our neighboring states is making its way to Minnesota," said Lieutenant Governor Flanagan. **"We are focused on protecting the health, safety, and well-being of Minnesotans during this challenging time. The decisions announced today take strong steps to target the riskiest spaces for COVID-19 to spread, according to the best data and resources we have available to us. Our team will continue to monitor the spread of the virus and take appropriate action to keep people safe."**

“Minnesota is in a dangerous phase of the pandemic with a dramatic jump in new cases,” said Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm. **“We’ve seen in other states how bad things can get when you have this kind of growth, and that’s why it’s critical that we take the right actions now to slow the spread of this disease. These focused actions taken by Governor Walz are designed to address some of the hottest of the hot spots we’ve seen and reduce the burden on our health care system and the heroes providing care to all of us.”**

“Minnesota is at a critical juncture in the pandemic, and if we don’t take action now we will be overwhelmed and facing the tragic scenario seen in neighboring state s**,”** said Dr. Michael Osterholm, director of the University of Minnesota’s Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) and a newly appointed member of President-elect Biden’s COVID-19 advisory board. **“Minnesotans need to be aware that overwhelmed health care systems will result in a catastrophic impact from a public health standpoint and also from an economic and social standpoint** .”

To support small businesses that are struggling as they do their part to combat the spread of COVID-19, Governor Walz today announced $10 million in Small Business Relief Grants. This funding will support an additional 1,000 businesses that have applied for the grant program. It supplements hundreds of millions of dollars in small business support that Minnesota has allocated since the beginning of the pandemic.

“ **Public health and our economic vitality are tied at the hip – we can’t make the kind of meaningful progress we want to on economic recovery until we get this pandemic under control. It's also clear that taking no action at this point would do more long-term harm to our economy than if we do some targeted things today,”** said Department of Employment and Economic Development Commissioner Steve Grove. “ **Let’s work together to get this right, Minnesota, so that we can end these regulations as soon as possible and get everyone back to work.** ”

This announcement comes after a week of record-setting highs in new cases, hospitalizations, and deaths due to COVID-19. Minnesota’s neighboring states have the highest infection rates in the nation. Minnesota’s case positivity rate is above 10 percent, twice the level at which COVID-19 spread is considered controllable. On Monday, the Governor also announced a significant expansion in barrier-free testing across the state to help control the spread of COVID-19.

Executive Order 20-96 will have the full force and effect of law upon the approval of the Executive Council, which is made up of Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan, Attorney General Keith Ellison, Secretary of State Steve Simon, and State Auditor Julie Blaha.

More information is available here (https://www.mn.gov/covid19/).

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