COVID-19 Update: Increasing Cases, Childhood Vaccinations, Lab Capacity Dashboard, BinaxNOW Testing Plan

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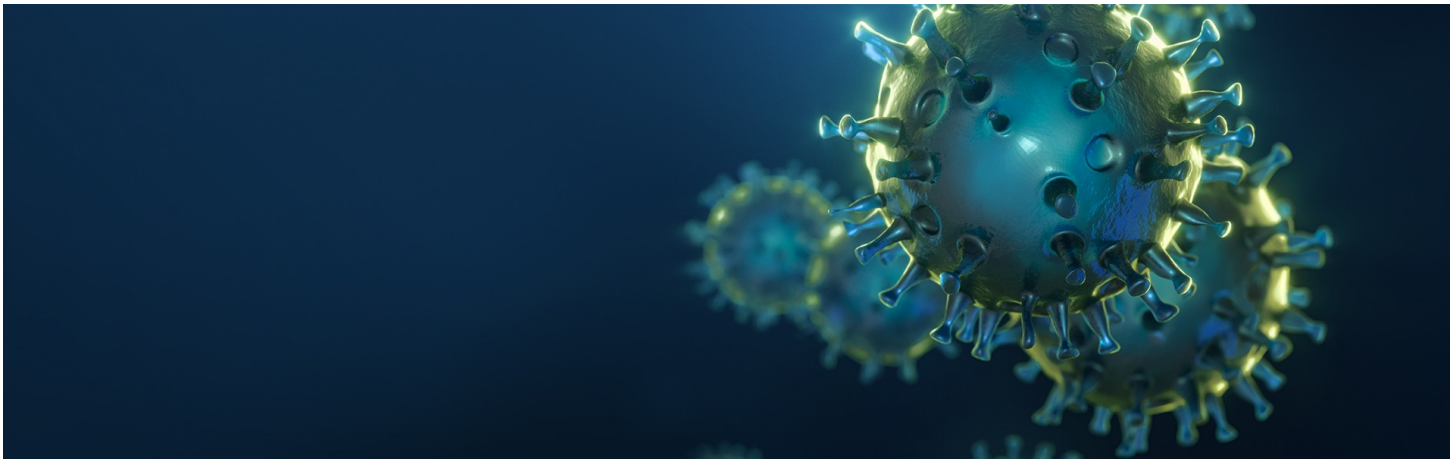

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine today provided the following updates on Ohio's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

INCREASING CASES

Governor DeWine today cautioned that the continuing increase in COVID-19 cases indicates that significant numbers of infections are likely this winter unless citizens take steps to mitigate and control the spread of the virus.

"Although a vaccine is on the way in the future, we can't control the timetable of the development of a vaccine - but we can control how much this flares up until then," said Governor DeWine. "We have avoided the large outbreaks that other countries and other states have seen, and so far, the combined efforts of Ohioans have kept the virus in check. We can't let our guards down now. We need to continue taking basic safety measures of wearing masks, keeping distance, and avoiding large gatherings."

In the last seven days, Ohio COVID-19 cases have averaged 1,475 cases per day by report date as compared to an average of approximately 1,000 cases per day only two weeks ago. Ohio's current positivity rate is 4.1 percent as compared to 2.7 percent on September 23 and 24. A total of 51 counties are considered high incidence and/or Alert Level 3 on Ohio's Public Health Advisory System.

A new public service announcement featuring former Ohio State coaches Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer encourages everyone to stay in the game and to stick to the game plan.

CHILDHOOD VACCINES

In Ohio and across the country, there has been a decrease in vaccinations administered to protect against diseases like measles, chickenpox, whooping cough, and polio, and today Governor DeWine today encouraged parents not to delay their children's well-visit vaccinations.

"While we do not have a vaccine yet for COVID-19, we can prevent more than a dozen other diseases from harming our children and our communities," said Governor DeWine. "It is critical that Ohioans and providers remain vigilant about keeping children up to date on these vaccines."

In the coming days, the Ohio Department of Medicaid will launch several initiatives to encourage childhood immunizations among its members. These efforts will be aimed at increasing safe, convenient access to vaccinations by providing mobile vaccination clinics and reducing administrative barriers for providers.

Governor DeWine also unveiled a new public service announcement that stresses the importance of childhood vaccines.

LAB CAPACITY DASHBOARD

Governor DeWine today announced the creation of a new Lab Capacity Dashboard to help pharmacists, nursing homes, colleges and universities, employers, and others administering COVID-19 tests find a lab to run their samples. This new resource will help connect groups that are testing with available labs in order to ease turnaround times and inform Ohioans of their COVID-19 status.

The new dashboard provides self-reported information about labs that can run tests, including hours of operation, types of tests they accept, estimated turn-around time, and locations. Labs with available capacity can sign up on the website to be included in this dashboard.

BINAX-NOW TESTING PLAN

Governor DeWine today discussed plans for Abbott BinaxNOW COVID-19 antigen screening tests that the federal government is providing to Ohio.

This week, Ohio is deploying thousands of these screening tests to colleges and universities to help them implement proactive screening plans. Next week, Ohio will begin sending tens of thousands of screening tests to nursing homes for both routine and outbreak testing requirements.

Governor DeWine emphasized that lab-based PCR tests are still considered the “gold standard” test that provides the most accurate results, and antigen tests can have false positives and false negatives.

"The opportunity to test more broadly and more often make this an important step forward in our fight against COVID-19 spread, even with the lower sensitivity and specificity of these tests," said Governor DeWine. "We do have protocols to follow up on results that are most likely to be false, but we need to be aware that this is part of testing at this scale."

Governor DeWine also cautioned that testing should not be considered a substitute for precautions such as wearing masks, social distancing, and avoiding large gatherings.

CURRENT COVID-19 DATA

There are 161,678 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Ohio and 5,017 confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths. A total of 16,565 people have been hospitalized, including 3,447 admissions to intensive care units. In-depth data can be accessed by visiting coronavirus.ohio.gov.

Video of today's full update, including versions with foreign language translation, can be viewed on the Ohio Channel's YouTube page.

For more information on Ohio's response to COVID-19, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH.

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