



County of Malheur

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release

Warning Week: COVID-19 test positivity rate and cases are rising in Malheur County

Malheur County's COVID-19 cases and test positivity rates are on the rise, according to a weekly [Risk Levels Summary](#) released by the Governor's Office this week. During the two-week period from March 28 to April 10, there were 24 new cases reported, for a case rate (number of cases per 100,000 people) of 74.9. The test positivity rate was 5.1%.

Both rates would qualify Malheur County, currently in the Lower Risk category, to move to Moderate Risk if they had occurred during the two weeks leading up to a Movement Week instead of a Warning Week, and if counties weren't given a two-week caution period meant to keep those that moved down in risk level during the previous movement period from experiencing a yo-yo effect.

This week's report shows an increase of 10 cases over the previous two-week period, from March 14-27, and a jump of almost 76% in the test positivity rate, which was previously 2.9%.

"These numbers are concerning, given the rise in cases throughout the country and the increase in the presence of variants in and around Oregon and Idaho," Malheur County Health Department Director Sarah Poe said.

According to the state's [Vaccination Trends](#) dashboard, Malheur County has the second-lowest vaccination rate in the state, with 2,276.9 people out of 10,000 having received at least one dose. Umatilla County has the lowest with 2,166.5, and Lincoln County the highest with 4,526.7.

If Malheur County's case count continues to increase, a higher risk level and the associated [risk-reduction measures](#), such as lower limits on capacity at businesses and activities, are not far off.

"As partners with Malheur County, the City of Ontario wants to see our businesses operate at their fullest capacity under the circumstances to maintain the economic health of our community. Vaccinations are proven to be one of the ways to keep case rates down. We urge you, for the sake of our business community and working families, to prioritize getting everyone in your household vaccinated who meets the conditions and recommendations of the CDC," Ontario City Manager Adam Brown said.

(MORE)

The Malheur County Health Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, religion, gender identity, political beliefs or source of income. Interpreter services and/or other assistive aids are provided at our facility at no cost. Our facility is accessible.

A nationwide pause in the distribution of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which began Tuesday following a [joint statement](#) by the CDC and FDA regarding their review of six cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot, is unlikely to create a shortage of vaccine in Malheur County where supply currently exceeds demand. Poe said there is enough Moderna vaccine available to proceed with an 8-day vaccine event that begins this Friday at the Malheur County Fairgrounds.

“It’s important to not exaggerate the very rare potential for risk that is being examined with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine,” Poe said. “The pause in distribution of Johnson & Johnson should give us more confidence in the safety of the vaccines that are available. The risk of severe illness from COVID-19 is still very real and preventable with vaccine,” Poe said.

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