

# Press Release

Hamilton County Health Department



Web: [health.hamiltontn.org](http://health.hamiltontn.org)

**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

May 21, 2021

## **Health Department Updates Mask Guidance and COVID-19 Case Data Reporting; Announces New Online Vaccination Event Calendar; Encourages Public to Get Vaccinated**

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN – The Hamilton County Health Department adjusts to changes in state and federal mask guidance, updates case data reporting schedule, continues to focus resources on reaching those who are eligible, but unvaccinated at this time, and provides an update on the Say Yes! COVID Test initiative.

### **COVID-19 Vaccinations in Hamilton County**

COVID-19 metrics continue to improve across Hamilton County, as more than 35% of the population is now fully vaccinated against the virus, with another 40% of individuals partially vaccinated. Although vaccination rates have plateaued, and Hamilton County vaccination rates have fallen below our metro partners, the Health Department remains optimistic that rates will increase in the coming weeks, as parents take their 12 to 15-year-olds in for their vaccination.

“The best way to protect yourself and others and get back to pre-pandemic activities is to get vaccinated,” says Health Department Administrator Becky Barnes.

### **Health Department Creates New Online Vaccination Calendar**

Visit the Health Department’s new online vaccination calendar at [vaccine.hamiltontn.gov](http://vaccine.hamiltontn.gov) to see where the Health Department is offering the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine each day. Multiple locations are available across the County, including the mass vaccination site at the Tennessee Riverpark, Health Department satellite health clinics, grocery stores, community markets, and academic institutions. No appointment is necessary and all events are free and open to individuals 12 years of age and older. Call the COVID-19 hotline at 423-209-8383 for questions.

Beginning Tuesday, May 25, the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine will be offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Health Department’s Sequoyah Health Center in Soddy Daisy. For more information, call the clinic at 423-209-5490.

### **COVID-19 Case Data Update**

Positive COVID-19 cases have continued to fall steadily over the past month. The Health Department, in line with the Tennessee Department of Health, will report COVID-19 case counts and other metrics Monday through Friday, with data from weekends and holidays now being updated the next business day. Epidemiology staff will continue to monitor weekend cases and alert the public if any changes arise.

“This is good news as cases continue to decline in Hamilton County,” says Health Department nurse manager Bev Fulbright. “Cases have now reached the lowest sustained weekly case rate since June of 2020.”

### **Mask Recommendation**

As Hamilton County cases steadily decline and vaccine eligibility rises, those who are fully vaccinated are being granted more freedoms. The Health Department’s recommendations on mask use follow recently revised [guidelines](#) recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing, except where required by local business and workplace guidance.

“We are currently in a transition time between wearing masks and not wearing masks,” says Health Department Administrator Becky Barnes. “With fewer places requiring masks, unvaccinated people won’t have the protection of general mask-wearing and social distancing any longer. The virus will be able to transmit from person to person more freely. With these changes, it’s more important than ever for unvaccinated people to get the vaccine.”

The Health Department encourages those who are not fully vaccinated to consider doing so at this time.

### **Say Yes! COVID Test Initiative**

Demand continues to rise for the free at-home, rapid test kits distributed as part of the Say Yes! COVID Test Initiative. The Health Department anticipates supplies will be depleted within the next few days. People who still wish to participate in this initiative may visit [CovidTestChattanooga.org](https://CovidTestChattanooga.org) for online ordering information and test pick-up sites in the area. Call the COVID-19 Hotline for details or assistance at 423-209-8383.

Pick up a free test kit this weekend at a pop-up event:

#### **St. Peter Missionary Baptist Church**

8120 Old Cleveland Pike, Ooltewah, TN 37363  
423-892-2533  
Sat May 22: 10:00am–2:00pm

#### **Collegedale Commons Market**

4950 Collegedale Drive  
4950 Swinyar Dr., Collegedale, TN 37363  
Sun May 23: 10:00am–2:00pm

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