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Vaccines Work: 97% of COVID Deaths, 95% of Hospitalizations and 94% of Cases are Among Unvaccinated Pennsylvanians

Latest COVID-19 Breakthrough Data Proves Vaccines are Working

Lancaster, PA - The Pennsylvania Department of Health's report on COVID-19 post-vaccination cases, commonly known as "breakthrough cases," shows the overwhelming majority of cases, hospitalizations and deaths in the state are among the unvaccinated.

"With nearly seven million Pennsylvanians fully vaccinated, the data makes it clear: the vaccines are safe and effective at preventing severe illness from COVID-19," Acting Secretary of Health Alison Beam said today during a news conference at Penn Medicine Lancaster General Hospital's Suburban Pavilion.

"The overwhelming majority of the COVID-19 related cases, hospitalizations and deaths in Pennsylvania occurred in people who were not vaccinated," she said. "In fact, the data shows that compared to unvaccinated people, fully vaccinated Pennsylvanians are seven times less likely to get COVID-19, and eight times less likely to die from COVID-19."

Penn Medicine Lancaster General Hospital's Chief Clinical Officer Dr. Michael Ripchinski agrees. "While masking and social distancing will help to reduce the risk of becoming infected and transmitting COVID-19, vaccines are the most effective way to protect those who are vulnerable, including the immunocompromised, and our children who are too young to get the vaccine."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines post-vaccination cases as individuals who are fully vaccinated and tested positive for COVID-19 more than 14 days after they completed their full one-dose or two-dose vaccination series. They are also referred to as vaccine breakthrough cases.

Today's online report shows that since January 2021:

- 97 percent of COVID-19-related deaths were in unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated people. Among a total of 6,472 COVID-19-related deaths identified in Pennsylvania in 2021, the latest data shows 213, or three percent, post-vaccination deaths identified. Cumulative death incidence among the unvaccinated and not fully vaccinated was 7.9 times as high as the death incidence among the fully vaccinated.
- 95 percent of reported hospitalizations with COVID-19 as the primary diagnosis/cause of admission were in unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated people. Among a total of 34,468 hospitalizations with COVID-19 as the primary diagnosis/cause of admission reported in Pennsylvania, 1,820 were reported to have occurred in fully vaccinated people. These figures account for data from 55 percent of all hospitals and 69 percent of acute care hospitals in Pennsylvania, representing approximately 80 percent of acute care beds in the state.
- 94 percent of reported COVID-19 cases were in unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated people. Among a total of 639,729 positive cases, there have been 35,389, or six percent, identified post-vaccination cases. Cumulative case incidence among the unvaccinated and not fully vaccinated was 7.1 times as high as the case incidence among the fully vaccinated.

“That means that 97 percent of deaths reported through the beginning of September were in unvaccinated or not fully-vaccinated people,” Beam said.

“This data is further proof that the vaccines are our best tool to protect ourselves against the virus, keep our children learning in schools, keep our workforce in-person, and foster social and economic recovery,” she said. “Every person who chooses to get vaccinated brings us a step closer to moving past the pandemic.”

As the number of COVID-19 cases in Pennsylvania is surging to more than 3,000 per day, doctors at numerous hospitals across the state recently began publicly discussing the number of patients in their facilities.

Penn State Health reports that 92 people are hospitalized with COVID-19 today; 27 are in the ICU. “Penn State Health is seeing some breakthrough COVID-19 cases but they are typically patients hospitalized for something else who test positive when they come in for treatment,” said Dr. Fahad Khalid, chief of hospital medicine at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. “Vaccinated patients typically don’t develop severe COVID-19 or need intensive care. However, about half of the unvaccinated COVID-19 patients here need intensive care, compared to less than one-quarter during earlier surges.”

UPMC also reports an increase in patients hospitalized with COVID-19, with nearly 440 patients across the system on Monday.

“Over the past several weeks, we have seen as much as 19 times more non-vaccinated patients ages 50 and younger admitted to UPMC hospitals compared to vaccinated patients,” said Dr. Donald Yealy, chief medical officer at UPMC. “Vaccination is crucial at this time. Our urgent plea is for everyone eligible for a vaccine to get one.”

In addition to the influx of COVID-19 patients, Dr. John Williams, chief of the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, recently reported at a UPMC press briefing, "We are seeing an increase in outpatient pediatric COVID-19 cases in clinics and emergency departments and an increase of children needing hospitalization because of COVID-19. These young children are at a higher risk for becoming infected now than any other time during the pandemic." He noted that, "In states where vaccinations are low, hospitalizations of children are four times higher than in states where vaccination of children is high. Fortunately, we know how to keep kids safe: masking, vaccination of everyone over 12, and testing.

"I truly hope that this data encourages everyone who has not yet been vaccinated to speak to their doctor about getting the vaccine as soon as possible to protect themselves and people around them," Beam said.

Post-vaccination data is now posted online at: [PA Post-Vaccination Data](#).

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