

IMMUNIZATION COVID-19 UPDATE

ISSUE NO 22 | JULY 7, 2021



QUESTION OF THE WEEK:

Is there any support for someone with a disability to access the COVID-19 vaccines?

Yes. On June 8, 2021, U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) launched a national hotline to connect people with disabilities to information and services to improve access to COVID-19 vaccines. **This hotline called the Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL) can be reached by dialing 1-888-677-1199 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. CST.**

This number will help people with disabilities:

- Find vaccination locations in their communities, make vaccination appointments, and connect with local services – such as accessible transportation – to overcome barriers to vaccination.
- Get information and resources to answer questions/concerns about the vaccines.
- Access information and services that promote independent living and address fundamental needs, such as food, housing, and transportation.

To learn more about and connect with DIAL visit acl.gov/dial; call 1-888-677-1199 from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. CST; or email DIAL@n4a.org.

VACCINE DOSES
ADMINISTERED IN
LOUISIANA

3,315,817

DELTA PLUS
VARIANT
BECOMES A
CONCERN IN
LOUISIANA

The Delta Plus Variant has been identified for the first time in Louisiana. (Page 2)

LDH AWARDED
\$140 MILLION TO
PREVENT FUTURE
COVID-19
OUTBREAKS IN
SCHOOLS

School systems will have the opportunity to implement a COVID-19 testing program with funding and support from LDH. (Page 2)

WEEKLY COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

Here is an overview of major updates that occurred over the week.

The Delta Plus Variant is in the U.S., What Makes it Different from Delta?



Another COVID-19 variant is garnering the attention of researchers. **While health officials have been raising concerns about the more transmissible B.1.617.2 variant also called Delta, scientists are working to learn more about a variant named "Delta Plus."**

India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced Delta Plus was a variant of concern late last month, noting that the form of the virus was more contagious, could bind more readily to lung cells, and potentially could evade some antibody response.

Public Health England published some preliminary information on the variant as well, stating that it had been detected in at least 11 countries. The United States was one of those countries, with more than 80 cases detected via genomic sequencing. According to the agency's report, Delta Plus carries all the mutations of Delta, plus the spike protein mutation K417N, which is also seen in the Beta variant, first detected in South Africa.

Delta-plus is thought to have the same higher rate of transmission as the Delta variant, which was originally identified in India, and is about two times as infectious as the original coronavirus strain. But it also has a characteristic of variants from South Africa and Brazil that makes it harder for antibodies to block it from entering cells.

The Delta Plus variant of COVID-19 has been identified for the first time in Louisiana, according to officials at Ochsner Health.

"It gives you a double whammy," said Dr. Lucio Miele, who has been part of the sequencing effort in his lab at LSU Health New Orleans. "It's a more infectious virus and it's a virus that is not as easily neutralized by antibodies."

Vaccinated people are still protected from this variant because the vaccine stamps out the coronavirus in a number of ways. But there doesn't seem to be a complete blockage of transmission. In other words, a vaccinated person may be able to spread the Delta variant, even if they are not showing symptoms, said Miele, citing evidence of such cases in Singapore.

And because of the differences present in Delta-Plus, unvaccinated people with "natural immunity" who have been infected with COVID in the past should not rely on prior infection

to protect against this variant, according to experts who study the variants.

"This virus can get past the defenses that our bodies made against earlier pandemic viruses," said Jeremy Kamil, a virologist who has been sequencing variants at LSU Health Shreveport. Being infected last summer will not necessarily protect someone from being infected by the Delta variant, he said, while the vaccines have been designed to produce an extremely strong response that the body retains for many months.

"You're much better off if you've gotten the vaccine," said Kamil.

For more information on current variants of concern, visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Louisiana Department of Health Awarded \$140 Million to Prevent Future COVID-19 Outbreaks in Schools

For the 2021 – 2022 school year, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) aims to support Louisiana schools by providing COVID-19 testing options to any school in the state at no cost, with the shared goal of keeping schools open while preventing outbreaks of COVID-19 amongst the last population to have access to vaccination (those under 12 years). Routine testing is available to anyone on school campuses: students, teachers, and staff. LDH has designed a participant incentive program that will encourage routine participation throughout the Fall 2021 School Year to the Spring 2022 School Year. LDH provides participating school districts with financial support to help schools implement the following routine testing options:

- **Option 1:** the "Do It Yourself" rapid testing program. LDH provides \$30k in staff funding, rapid PCR testing materials, and training for a school staff person to run a routine COVID-19 Testing Program in their school.
- **Option 2:** the "Turn-key" PCR testing service allows schools to partner with LDH vendors who will provide the end-to-end testing program for the school. LDH will fund the testing program and provide \$14.5k in staff time reimbursements associated with the logistical needs to help coordinate this program.
- **Option 3:** Schools can choose to opt-out of routine testing and call upon LDH if there is an outbreak.

The purpose of this funding and LDH's statewide COVID-19 testing program is to keep COVID-19 from spreading through our school systems, infecting the unvaccinated children and teachers, and shutting down extracurricular activities or an entire school.

To learn more about the K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program, visit tinyurl.com/k-12covidtestingla or email K-12covidtesting@la.gov.

Travelers Returning from Cruise Ships and River Cruise Voyages

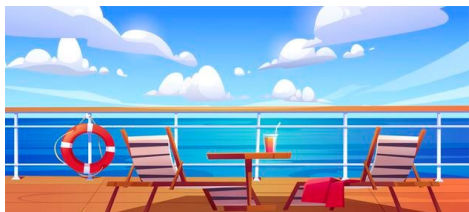
On May 5, 2021, CDC released the next two phases of the Framework for Conditional Sailing Order (CSO) for cruise ships operating or seeking to operate in U.S. waters. With the issuance of these next two phases, cruise ship operators now have all the necessary requirements and recommendations they need to start simulated voyages before resuming restricted passenger voyages, and to apply for a COVID-19 conditional sailing certificate to begin sailing with restricted passenger voyages. CDC may adjust these requirements and recommendations based on public health considerations and other factors.

CDC recommends that people who are not [fully vaccinated](#) avoid travel on cruise ships, including river cruises, worldwide. That's because the chance of getting COVID-19 on cruise ships is high since the virus appears to spread more easily between people in close quarters aboard ships. CDC has issued a [Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#) for cruise ship travel.

Passengers who decide to travel should take the following steps to protect others after their return from a cruise ship or river cruise voyage:

- If you are fully vaccinated:
 - Get tested 3–5 days after your trip.
 - If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others from getting infected.
 - Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms for 14 days after travel; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms.
 - You do NOT need to stay home and self-quarantine after cruise travel.
- If you are not fully vaccinated:
 - Get tested 3–5 days after your trip.
 - If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others from getting infected.
 - Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms for 14 days after travel; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms.
 - Stay home and self-quarantine for 7 days after cruise travel, even if you test negative.
 - If you do not get tested, stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after cruise travel.
 - Avoid being around people who are at increased risk for severe illness for 14 days, whether you get tested or not.

For more information on traveling on cruise ships during the pandemic, visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).



LOUISIANA COVID-19 VACCINE DEMOGRAPHICS

SERIES COMPLETED BY RACE:

- **White:** 58.89%
- **Black:** 28.79%
- **American Indian:** 0.33%
- **Asian:** 2.96%
- **Native Hawaiian:** 0.21%
- **Unknown:** 1.64%
- **Other:** 7.18%

SERIES COMPLETED BY AGE:

- **5-17:** 2.24%
- **18-29:** 10.27%
- **30-39:** 11.61%
- **40-49:** 13.02%
- **50-59:** 17.67%
- **60-69:** 22.16%
- **70+:** 23.02%

SERIES COMPLETED BY GENDER:

- **Female:** 55.36%
- **Male:** 43.36%
- **Unknown:** 0.28%

All breakdowns shown here are for Louisiana residents only. Race data completeness is expected to improve as we continue our outreach with vaccine providers.

Good Reads

First case of Delta-Plus, 'double-whammy' variant of COVID, detected in Louisiana – This article talks about how the Delta-Plus variant has been identified for the first time in Louisiana.

Read more at [nola.com](https://www.nola.com).

Three studies, one result: vaccines point the way out of the pandemic – This article talks about three scientific studies released on June 28 that offered fresh evidence that widely used vaccines will continue to protect people against the coronavirus for long periods.

Read more at [startribune.com](https://www.startribune.com).

Type 2 diabetes in children doubled at OLOL last year, the latest sign of COVID impact on Louisiana – This article talks about a recent increase in Type 2 diabetes in Baton Rouge children that could be related to the virus.

Read more at [nola.com](https://www.nola.com).