

In the Know with Church Health

COVID-19 Delta Variant Q&A

Of all the COVID-19 variants emerging in hot spots around the world, the Delta variant has proven to be the most aggressive in mutating and taking hold, sweeping across the US in just a few weeks. In addition to the vaccines, our behaviors in response to the presence of the variant in our community gives the chance to be better together so we can all flourish. Here are straightforward answers to a few common questions to support healthy decisions for ourselves and those we love.

Q. Why is the Delta variant so different than the others?

A. The Delta variant in an infected person's throat has a much higher viral load than other variants. This is true whether the person has been vaccinated or not. Also, Delta is more than twice as contagious as earlier variants, with each infected person infecting five others. Almost all COVID-19 infections in the US now are the Delta variant because of these factors. The virus remains most dangerous to people who have not been vaccinated. (CDC)

Q. Should I get a COVID-19 vaccination booster shot?

A. In people who have healthy immune systems, two doses of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine provide greater than 90 percent protection from severe illness. People with compromised immune systems have lower benefit. A third dose boosts the effectiveness for these individuals. Health officials also believe all adults will benefit from a third shot eight months after the second one to keep immunity high. (CDC)

Q. If I'm vaccinated, why should I wear a mask to protect against the Delta variant?

A. The vaccines prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death. They do not create the kind of antibody that means a vaccinated individual has no risk of infection. Most likely the infection will have no symptoms or be very mild. However, it could still spread to others. Vaccines help you from becoming ill. Masks help interrupt the spread of the virus even when you might not know you've been infected with the highly contagious Delta variant. (CDC)

Q. Can my child catch the Delta variant?

A. Yes. Nearly 4.5 million children have tested positive for COVID-19, and the Delta variant is far more infectious than other strains. Cases in children have been steadily increasing in recent weeks. Hospitalization rates for children with COVID-19 are rising, and about one in three children hospitalized are in intensive care. Children under 12 are currently not eligible for a vaccine.