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For immediate release

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Panhandle COVID risk dial updated based on the latest science and vaccination rates

The Panhandle COVID risk dial is informed on the latest science available and updated accordingly. Guidance, counties, and communities will be updated at www.pphd.org in the next few days. Updates include the following:

- **Testing** – access and turnaround time (if the result is back within 48 hours)
- **Case rate** – will change to a 7-day rolling average per day per 100,000
- **ICU bed availability** – will shift to hospital beds with a COVID patient, not ICU beds individually
- **Deaths** - new deaths per week, this is a new indicator being added
- **Overall Panhandle vaccination rate** - this is a new indicator being added

After a temporary pause, CDC and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommend use of Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen (J&J/Janssen) COVID Vaccine resume in the United States. A review of all available data at this time shows that the J&J/Janssen COVID vaccine’s known and potential benefits outweigh its known and potential risks.

Women under 50 years old should be aware of the rare but increased risk of the adverse event called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS), and that there are other COVID vaccine options available for which this risk has not been seen. CDC and FDA will continue to monitor the safety of all COVID vaccines.

The South African COVID variant B.1.351 has been confirmed in the Panhandle. Variants are more contagious and can cause more severe illness and hospitalization.

“Getting vaccinated is critical to slowing the spread of COVID, especially with the presence of variants in the Panhandle,” said Kim Engel, Panhandle Public Health District Director.

Ample COVID vaccine supply and appointments are available. Panhandle residents 18 and older can self-schedule with two easy steps:

- Register on the vaccinate.ne.gov website.
- For the corresponding counties, pick a location, day, and time that works for you. Dates and times will be added to the links as they are made available.

- **Box Butte/Grant:** <https://tinyurl.com/25mwaapu> or [safeway.com](https://www.safeway.com)
- **Cheyenne/Deuel:** <https://tinyurl.com/5b5uac8p>, [walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com), or [safeway.com](https://www.safeway.com)
- **Dawes/Sioux:** <https://tinyurl.com/x5d5nnbn>, [walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com), or [safeway.com](https://www.safeway.com)
- **Garden:** sign up at vaccinate.ne.gov – a provider will call you
- **Kimball:** <https://tinyurl.com/d2u8txrs>
- **Morrill:** <https://tinyurl.com/sb8mvumm>
- **Sheridan:** <https://tinyurl.com/cvrmkv38>
- **Scottsbluff/Banner:** <https://tinyurl.com/w6b84fkf>, [walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com), or [safeway.com](https://www.safeway.com)

The two steps are encouraged to ease the vaccine process. There is no charge for the vaccine. Pfizer will be coming soon to the Panhandle. Teens ages 16 & 17 can register now at vaccinate.ne.gov. For the Moderna shot, the second dose is needed to produce the best immunity results.

People who are fully COVID vaccinated will not be required to quarantine due to close contact. If you have lost your COVID vaccine card, go to <https://tinyurl.com/2zh7uhhu>.

Unified Command confirms 31 more cases of COVID in the Panhandle since last reporting on Monday, April 19. The investigations are underway, all close contacts will be quarantined.

All Ages: 31

County	Cases
Banner	0
Box Butte	4
Cheyenne	3
Dawes	4
Deuel	1
Garden	1
Grant	0
Kimball	1
Morrill	2
Scotts Bluff	13
Sheridan	2
Sioux	0

Exposure Type

Community	29%
Close Contact	42%
Travel	0%
Under Investigation	29%

March 2, 2020-April 26, 2021

- **Total Tests Conducted: 37,899**
- **Positive: 9,000**
- **Last 14 days (active) cases: 42**
- **Last week's cases: 27**
- **Last week's positivity rate: 7.9%**
- **Deaths: 191**
- **Active Hospitalizations: 1**
- **Total Cumulative Hospitalizations: 543**
- **Doubling time (November 15, 2020 – April 26, 2021): 155 days**

Avoid the Three Cs:

- **Avoid Crowded Places** – Avoid gathering in groups where you cannot maintain 6-foot of distance from others
- **Avoid Close Contact** – Wear a mask over your nose and mouth or maintain 6-foot distance when you are spending more than 15 total minutes with people you don't live with
- **Avoid Confined Spaces** – Avoid enclosed spaces with poor ventilation

Current COVID testing access can be found at www.pphd.org.

The Panhandle COVID dashboard is updated weekdays at 4:30 pm MT and available at www.pphd.org. For the most up to date information from the CDC, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Panhandle Public Health District, Region 21, 22, and 23 Emergency Management, and Scotts Bluff County Health Department are working as a unified command on this evolving situation. Essential updates will be regularly communicated to the public and community partners.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. Visit our website www.pphd.org.