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OCCHD advises vaccination as the best protection against deadly Delta variant

(Oklahoma City) - The Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD) reminds residents that the COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to stay protected against the COVID-19 Delta variant, which has spread across Europe and moved into the U.S. at a pace that has the CDC and local health officials concerned.

“The CDC recently labeled the Delta Variant a variant of concern, and we want to warn everyone that this variant is more transmissible and more likely to cause severe illness in unvaccinated people,” said Phil Maytubby, chief operating officer at OCCHD. Experts warn it is only a matter of time before the Delta variant is the top variant circulating in Oklahoma County, and younger Oklahomans are at most risk.

“Between June 20th and June 26th, forty percent of the new COVID-19 cases in Oklahoma were identified within individuals 15-34 years of age,” added Maytubby. “It is not surprising given this group has the lowest percentage of individuals vaccinated”, he continued.

Across the U.S., the CDC reports the Delta variant now makes up approximately 30 percent of all COVID-19 cases, and that number is expected to grow significantly in the coming weeks.

The OCCHD continues to monitor increases in case activity through sewage surveillance, localized COVID-19 outbreaks and COVID-19 positivity rates, particularly observing any indication of possible transmission of the Delta variant.

“The best tool we have to understand how the Delta variant is impacting our community is through COVID testing,” said Maytubby. “We urge all Oklahoma County residents to get tested if you are showing symptoms or believe you have COVID-19, as this not only keeps your family & friends safe, the testing data helps public health officials slow the spread of variants in our community,” Maytubby added.

OCCHD reminds Oklahoma County residents that the best protection against current identified strains of COVID-19 is vaccination.

“We have a chance to get ahead of this situation through vaccination, so if you have been

undecided about vaccination now is the time to get vaccinated”, Maytubby said. “Vaccine is widely available across Oklahoma County, and anyone who chooses not to receive the vaccine runs the risk of catching the Delta strain, and potentially becoming severely ill or even losing their life because of it,” Maytubby added.

For information on receiving a vaccine in Oklahoma, residents are encouraged to visit www.vaxokc.com. Free COVID—19 testing is available at www.testokc.com.

To learn more about the Delta variant, visit the CDC variant classifications and definitions website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/variant-info.html>.