



COVID-19 Community Levels: Toolkit for Communicating Public Health Recommendations



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH SERVICES

Division of Public Health
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Background

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) recognizes that we have entered a new phase of the pandemic. With widespread access to vaccines, tests, and effective treatments, the risk of severe health outcomes associated with COVID-19 have been greatly reduced. These tools now allow for a shift in focus to preventing severe outcomes, such as hospitalization and death, related to COVID-19 and focusing resources on those who are most vulnerable to poor outcomes. A large portion of Wisconsinites have also developed some level of immunity due to vaccination or prior COVID-19 illness. COVID-19 boosters are also widely available to individuals 12 and older and provide additional protection against severe illness associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection. Although there is a decreased risk of severe health outcomes for many Wisconsinites, SARS-CoV-2 will continue to circulate in and pose a threat to Wisconsin's most vulnerable populations and to the capacity of our health care systems.

During this phase of the pandemic, DHS is using the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) to guide Wisconsin's COVID-19 response activities and public recommendations. The CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels are a tool for monitoring the following data metrics to support state and local decision making about strategies to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of COVID-19:

- The number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.
- New COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.
- The average percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients in the past 7 days.

Using these metrics, every county in the country is assigned a weekly COVID-19 Community Level of "low," "medium," or "high." Each COVID-19 Community Level contains specific guidance that should be followed by organizations and individuals to minimize the impacts of COVID-19.

DHS will monitor [Wisconsin's COVID-19 Community Levels](#) closely to assess the risk and provide relevant technical assistance to partners across the state. DHS encourages local and tribal health departments (LTHDs) to adjust their COVID-19 response activities and public recommendations based on their jurisdiction's current COVID-19 Community Level. Local public health and individuals can also use COVID-19 Community Levels to plan COVID-19 mitigation strategies based on current local data.

The following toolkit contains resources and recommendations for LTHDs to use the COVID-19 Community Levels as a tool to inform their counties on COVID-19 preventive strategies. As we continue to confront COVID-19, response activities and public recommendations need to adapt based on the most up to date science and current local risk level of COVID-19.

Frequently Asked Questions For LTHDs

DHS developed a series of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels. LTHDs are encouraged to share these FAQs with local community partners or post them on their county website to promote the COVID-19 Community Levels as a tool that can be used to inform decision making regarding COVID-19 preventative strategies.

What are COVID-19 Community Levels?

[COVID-19 Community Levels](#) are a tool developed by the CDC to help counties and individuals decide what prevention strategies to take based on current county-level data. Counties are assigned a COVID-19 Community Level of "low," "medium," or "high" depending on:

- How many hospital beds are being used due to COVID-19;
- Hospital admissions due to COVID-19; and
- Total number of new COVID-19 cases.

The COVID-19 Community Levels focus on monitoring the impact of severe COVID-19 illness for individuals and in communities, and then informing what steps we can take to protect vulnerable populations and reduce strain on health care systems.

Why did the CDC change the way they measure COVID-19 risk levels?

The CDC's previous COVID-19 community transmission levels were developed in fall 2020 before highly effective vaccines were available. The indicators used to calculate community transmission levels reflected the initial goal of monitoring the spread of COVID-19 in a population without any form or level of immunity and prior to additional mitigation tools including vaccines and therapeutics. The community transmission levels were mainly based on the number of new COVID-19 cases and did not directly reflect the impact COVID-19 had on health care systems across the country.

The new [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) focus on monitoring the impact of [severe COVID-19 illness](#) and burden on local health care systems. COVID-19 Community Levels consider the current [tools](#) available to combat severe outcomes associated with COVID-19. With widespread access to vaccines, tests, and effective treatments, the risk of severe COVID-19 disease is greatly reduced. These tools now allow for a shift in focus to preventing severe outcomes, such as hospitalization and death, related to COVID-19 and focusing resources on those who are most vulnerable to poor outcomes.

Most Americans have also developed some level of immunity due to vaccination or prior COVID-19 infection. COVID-19 boosters are also widely available to individuals 12 and older and provide additional protection against severe illness associated with COVID-19 infection. The new COVID-19 Community Levels were developed based on two years of scientific data. They provide a framework for local public health entities and individuals to consider alongside local data to guide recommendations for the steps individuals and communities can take to protect vulnerable populations and reduce strain on health care systems in their community.

As we continue to confront COVID-19, using the COVID-19 Community Levels broadly demonstrates the CDC's and DHS's shift of using strategies that primarily focus on stopping the spread of COVID-19 to using strategies that mitigate the severe impacts of COVID-19 on individuals and community systems.

How are COVID-19 Community Levels measured?

The [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) are based on local data that help communities determine:

- How much the SARS-CoV-2 virus is spreading in an area;
- How many people in the area are getting sick enough with COVID-19 to require medical care; and
- If the area's health care system has the resources to provide care for all patients, whether or not they have COVID-19.

When a county has a low COVID-19 Community Level, it means it is experiencing limited impacts on its health care system and is seeing low levels of severe disease. If a county has a medium COVID-19 Community Level, it is experiencing some impact on its health care system and is seeing more cases of severe illness. If a county moves from either a low or medium COVID-19 Community Level to a high one, it means the local health care system is becoming strained, which may affect access to care and treatment for all in the community. It also means more people are experiencing severe illness. If a county has a high COVID-19 Community Level, everyone should take additional COVID-19 precautions including wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator in public indoor settings. Taking additional COVID-19 precautions, like wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator, helps reduce the spread of COVID-19, protects vulnerable populations, and reduces strain on health care systems.

COVID-19 Community Levels can be used to understand how COVID-19 is impacting counties at the local level. They do not mean people should stop practicing primary prevention strategies, like staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccines and getting tested when experiencing symptoms. Practicing layered prevention strategies is the most effective way to stay protected against preventing severe health outcomes associated with COVID-19 infection.

What COVID-19 prevention steps should I take if I am in a low COVID-19 Community Level?

Regardless of the [COVID-19 Community Level](#), there are simple actions every Wisconsinite can take to protect their own health and the health of others:

- **Know the COVID-19 community level** where you live or are traveling to, and follow the associated guidelines
- **[Stay up to date](#) on COVID-19 vaccines** by getting all recommended vaccines and booster doses
- **Get [tested](#) for COVID-19** if you have symptoms or were [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19
- **Stay home when you are [sick](#)** and seek [treatment](#) if you are at high risk or are experiencing severe illness

While wearing a [well-fitting mask or respirator](#) is not recommended in public indoor settings within counties with low COVID-19 Community Levels, individuals, especially those who are immunocompromised or at increased risk of severe disease, may continue to wear one to further reduce risk.

What COVID-19 prevention steps should I take if I am in a medium COVID-19 Community Level?

If a county has a medium COVID-19 Community Level the number of people experiencing severe illness from COVID-19 and the number of hospitalizations has increased and is having some impact on local health care systems.

Regardless of the COVID-19 Community Level, there are simple actions every Wisconsinite can take to protect their own health and the health of others:

- **Know the COVID-19 community level** where you live or are traveling to, and follow the associated guidelines.
- **[Stay up to date](#) on COVID-19 vaccines** by getting all recommended vaccines and booster doses.
- **Get [tested](#) for COVID-19** if you have symptoms or were [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19.
- **Stay home when you are [sick](#)** and seek [treatment](#) if you are at high risk or are experiencing severe illness.

While wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator is not recommended in public indoor settings within counties with a medium COVID-19 Community Level, individuals, especially those who are immunocompromised or at increased risk of severe disease, may continue to wear one to further reduce risk. DHS recommends that individuals consider using a COVID-19 self-test before gathering with others if they are in a county with a medium COVID-19 Community Level.

What COVID-19 prevention steps should I take if I am in a high COVID-19 Community Level?

If a county reaches a high COVID-19 Community Level health care systems in a county have the potential to become overwhelmed. Individuals should take additional steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and reduce strain on their local hospitals. Wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator in indoor, public settings is now

recommended for everyone, regardless of vaccination status. If you are at high-risk for severe illness, talk with your health care provider and consider taking additional public health precautions, such as avoiding non-essential indoor activities in public. Individuals should also consider using a COVID-19 self-test before gathering with friends and family to know your COVID-19 status.

At every COVID-19 Community Level, there are simple actions every Wisconsinite can take to continue to protect their own health and the health of others:

- **Know the COVID-19 community level** where you live or are traveling to, and follow the associated guidelines.
- **Stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccines** by getting all recommended vaccines and booster doses.
- **Get tested for COVID-19** if you have symptoms or were [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19.
- **Stay home when you are sick** and seek [treatment](#) if you are at high risk or are experiencing severe illness.

Do I have to wear a mask in school regardless of my COVID-19 Community Level?

Schools are recommended to use [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) to inform their guidance and prevention strategies. Wearing a [well-fitting mask or respirator](#) is recommended in schools located in counties with high COVID-19 Community Levels. If you are in a high COVID-19 Community Level, everyone, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a well-fitting mask or respirator in school settings.

In counties with low or medium COVID-19 Community Levels, students, teachers, parents, and school staff may choose to wear a well-fitting mask or respirator. People who are immunocompromised or at an increased risk for severe illness are encouraged to wear a well-fitting mask or respirator in schools at any time to further reduce risk.

Do the COVID-19 Community Levels apply to health care settings?

The guidance associated with [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) do not apply to health care settings, such as nursing homes and hospitals. DHS recommends that health care facilities continue to follow CDC guidance specific to these settings. Health care facilities are prone to COVID-19 outbreaks, and it is important for health care facilities to continue to utilize screening tests and well-fitting masks and respirators to protect vulnerable populations.

Do the new COVID-19 Community Levels mean COVID-19 is endemic in the US?

The new [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) do not mean the pandemic is over. Although COVID-19 continues to circulate throughout the country and Wisconsin, we now have more tools available to prevent severe outcomes associated with COVID-19 infection and reduce strain on our health care systems. Highly effective vaccines, boosters, tests, and treatment options are widely available and reduce the risk of dying or being hospitalized due to COVID-19 infection. While DHS expects COVID-19 levels to increase and decrease at certain times, counties can use the COVID-19 Community Levels as a tool to determine necessary prevention strategies to stay safe and healthy.



Low COVID-19 Community Levels: Resources



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH SERVICES

Talking Points

- **[insert LTHD] continues to monitor the spread and impact of COVID-19 in [insert city/county] County, using the [CDC Community Levels](#) as a measure to help us understand the current risk COVID-19 poses to our community, and determine the prevention steps we recommend people take to protect their own health and the health of others.**
 - CDC community levels are used nationwide to measure the impact of COVID-19 illness on the health of individuals and health care systems in communities.
 - Counties are assigned a COVID-19 Community Level of “low,” “medium,” or “high.”
 - Each county’s COVID-19 Community Level is calculated using three key metrics:
 - New COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.
 - The average percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients in the past 7 days.
 - The number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.
 - **[insert county/jurisdiction] is currently designated as having a LOW Community Level**
 - This means that although COVID-19 is still circulating in our community, we are seeing low numbers of people experiencing severe illness that are resulting in hospitalizations
 - **To keep our community’s COVID-19 community level low, we urge every resident to take simple steps that can protect your own health and the health of those around you.**
 - **Be aware of the [COVID-19 community level](#)** where you live or are traveling to, and follow the associated guidance.
 - **Stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccines** by getting all recommended vaccines and booster doses.
 - **Get [tested](#) for COVID-19** if you have symptoms or were exposed to someone with COVID-19. Consider keeping [self-tests](#) at home. Order free tests online from the federal government at [COVIDTests.gov](#).
 - **Stay home if you are [sick or test positive for COVID-19](#).** Follow recommendations for [isolation](#) and [quarantine](#) by using the CDC’s Quarantine & Isolation Calculator. If you are at high-risk of developing severe COVID-19, treatments are available by prescription from locations including community clinics, primary health care providers, or designated Test-to-Treat locations. Dial 2-1-1 to find a provider near you.
 - Wearing a well-fitting mask in public indoor settings can further reduce your risk, however it is not recommended if your county is at a low community level.
 - Maintain good air ventilation within indoor spaces by opening windows and doors, when possible.
 - If you are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 due to your age, vaccination status, or other health conditions:
 - A health care provider can help you determine whether you need to wear a well-fitting mask or take other precautions to prevent COVID-19, including accessing COVID-19 therapeutics. To find a clinic or health care provider near you, dial 2-1-1.
 - Consider staying 6 or more feet away from people in public indoor settings.
 - **Continuing to layer these prevention strategies can protect yourself and loved ones from COVID-19.**
 - [insert jurisdiction] will continue to monitor the impact and severity of COVID-19 in [city/county] and provide public recommendations based on the current risk that COVID-19 poses to residents.
 - COVID-19 cases are expected to change over time. This means, the recommended prevention strategies will also change based on your current COVID-19 Community Level.

Sample Press Release

[X County] Is Experiencing Low COVID-19 Community Levels

Local hospitals are experiencing limited impacts of COVID-19, residents encouraged to take actions to keep levels low

The [X city/County/Tribal Public Health] has announced [X County] is now experiencing low [COVID-19 Community Levels](#). This means [X] County hospitals are seeing limited impacts of COVID-19 and few people are experiencing severe illness. During this time, [X city/County/Tribal community] residents are encouraged to continue to take simple actions that can protect health in [X] County.

“Although [X city/County/Tribal community] currently has a low COVID-19 Community Level, there are small actions each of us should continue to take that will make a big impact in keeping these levels low and protecting our entire community against COVID-19,” said [Public Health Officer X]. “The most important action is to get vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccines and boosters remain the most effective tools for preventing severe COVID-19 illness, hospitalization, and death. [X city/County/Tribal] Public Health encourages everyone who is eligible to get all recommended COVID-19 vaccines and booster doses to protect themselves and to continue to prevent strain on our health care systems.”

With a low COVID-19 Community Level, wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator in public indoor settings is not recommended, but individuals may choose to wear one to further reduce their risk. Some community settings may still require them. These include health care settings, nursing homes, adult care and correctional facilities, and homeless and domestic violence shelters. Local businesses, transportation hubs and transit may also require masks if they choose.

[X city/County/Tribal community] Public Health also encourages all residents to continue to use layered prevention strategies to stay protected against COVID-19. In addition to staying [up to date](#) with COVID-19 vaccines, [X city/County/Tribal community] residents should:

- Get [tested](#) for COVID-19 if you have symptoms or were exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Stay home when you are [sick](#) and seek [treatment](#) if you are at high risk or experiencing severe illness.

Continuing to follow guidance associated with your COVID-19 Community Level can help residents plan prevention strategies to feel safer in [X city/County/Tribal community], protect vulnerable populations, and reduce strain on local hospitals.

While the virus that causes COVID-19 continues to circulate throughout Wisconsin, [X] County’s Community Level may change. [X city/County/Tribal community] residents should be prepared to adjust their COVID-19 prevention strategies if [X] County moves into a medium or high COVID-19 Community Level.

[X city/County/Tribal community] residents can stay informed about [X] County’s COVID-19 Community Level by visiting, [insert preferred webpage].

Newsletter/Blog Message

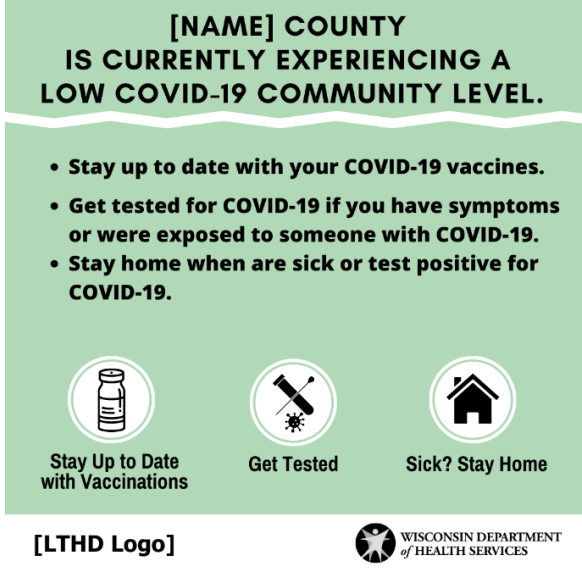

[X] city/County/Tribal community] is currently experiencing a low [COVID-19 Community Level](#). This means [X city/County/Tribal community] is seeing a limited impact on local health care systems and low levels of severe illness associated with COVID-19 infection. During this time, [X city/County/Tribal community] residents are encouraged to continue to take these simple actions that can protect health in [X]:

- **Stay [up to date](#) on COVID-19 vaccines** by getting all recommended vaccines and booster doses.
- **Get [tested](#) for COVID-19** if you have symptoms or were exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- **Stay home when you are [sick](#) or [test positive](#) for COVID-19**, and seek [treatment](#) if you are at high risk or experiencing severe illness.

- Continue to follow guidance associated with the COVID-19 Community Level here in [X city/county] or wherever you travel.

The CDC's COVID-19 Community Level are a tool that residents can use to plan the actions we can all take to stay healthy and keep our community safe. [X city/County/Tribal community] residents can stay informed about [X] County's COVID-19 Community Level by visiting, [insert preferred link].

Social Media Graphics

Social Media Graphic	Caption
 <p>[NAME] COUNTY IS CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING A LOW COVID-19 COMMUNITY LEVEL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines. • Get tested for COVID-19 if you have symptoms or were exposed to someone with COVID-19. • Stay home when are sick or test positive for COVID-19. <p>Stay Up to Date with Vaccinations Get Tested Sick? Stay Home</p> <p>[LTHD Logo] WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT of HEALTH SERVICES</p>	<p>[X 's] COVID-19 Community Level is currently low. This means you can feel safer doing things like heading out without a mask or attending larger gatherings.</p> <p>Help us keep our levels low by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staying up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines and boosters - Getting tested if you are exposed or feel sick - Staying home when sick or if you test positive <p>Find more information at [insert local/state/covid.gov link]</p>
 <p>LOW COVID-19 COMMUNITY LEVEL</p> <p>WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT of HEALTH SERVICES</p>	<p>[X city/County/tribal community] currently has a LOW COVID-19 Community Level. This means that there have been relatively low numbers of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. We can continue to keep [X city/county/Tribal community] healthy and safe by getting vaccinated, getting tested, and staying home when sick.</p> <p>Learn more about staying safe in counties with low COVID-19 Community Levels, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html</p>



Medium COVID-19 Community Levels: Resources



Talking Points

- **[insert LTHD] continues to monitor the spread and impact of COVID-19 in [insert city/county] County, using the [CDC Community Levels](#) as a measure to help us understand the current risk COVID-19 poses to our community, and determine the prevention steps we recommend people take to protect their own health and the health of others.**
 - CDC community levels are used nationwide to measure the impact of COVID-19 illness on the health of individuals and health care systems in communities.
 - Counties are assigned a COVID-19 Community Level of “low,” “medium,” or “high.”
 - Each county’s COVID-19 Community Level is calculated using three key metrics:
 - New COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.
 - The average percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients in the past 7 days.
 - The number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.
- **[insert county/jurisdiction] is currently designated as having a MEDIUM Community Level**
 - This means that the number of people experiencing severe illness from COVID-19 and the number of hospitalizations has increased and is having some impact on local health care systems.
 - All residents are encouraged to take simple precautions today
- **To help protect your health and the health of others in [X] city/county, we urge every resident to:**
 - **Be sure you are [up to date](#) with COVID-19 vaccines.** Getting all your recommended vaccines and booster doses is the best protection. Find a vaccine provider near you by visiting [covid.gov](#).
 - **Know [where to get tested](#) if you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or are exposed to someone with COVID-19.** Visit a community testing site or consider keeping [self-tests](#) at home. Order free tests online from the federal government at [COVIDTests.gov](#).
 - **Stay home if you are sick or test positive for COVID-19.** Following recommended [isolation](#) and [quarantine guidelines can help protect others from getting sick](#). For more information about how long to you should stay home, visit the CDC’s [Quarantine & Isolation Calculator](#).
 - **Maintain good air ventilation within indoor spaces** by opening windows and doors, when possible.
 - In addition to these key steps, you can choose to wear a well-fitting mask in public indoor settings to further reduce your risk.
 - If you live with someone or frequently visit someone who is at increased risk for COVID-19, be sure you protect them by:
 - Wearing a well-fitting mask around them.
 - Using a self-test before gathering. If possible, it is always safer to gather outdoors.
 - If you are at increased risk for severe COVID-19:
 - Talk with a health care provider about whether you need to wear a well-fitting mask or take other precautions to prevent COVID-19, including accessing COVID-19 therapeutics. To find a clinic or health care provider near you, dial 2-1-1.
 - Consider staying 6 or more feet away from people in public indoor settings.

Sample Press Release

[X] County] Is Experiencing Medium COVID-19 Community Levels

Increased cases mean city/county residents should take additional precautions

The [X] City/County/Tribal Health Department] has announced [X city/County/Tribal community] is now experiencing a medium COVID-19 Community Level. This means that [the number of people experiencing severe

illness from COVID-19/the number of hospitalizations has increased] and is having some impact on local health care systems. All residents are encouraged to increase simple precautions today.

"The most important thing [X city/County/Tribal community] residents can do today to protect themselves and our community is to get a COVID-19 vaccine and be sure you are up to date on all recommended booster doses," said [Public Health Officer X]. "The more people in [X city/County/Tribal community] who are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines means more people are protected against severe health outcomes associated with COVID-19. This helps reduce strain on [X] area hospitals, and slow the spread of disease, and can save lives."

With a medium COVID-19 Community Level, wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator in public indoor settings is not recommended, however residents may consider wearing them in public indoor spaces to further reduce their risk. Individuals at high-risk for severe illness can talk with a health care provider about taking additional precautions, including wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator and using COVID-19 self-tests before getting together with friends and family.

Along with ensuring that you are up to date on COVID-19 vaccines, residents are encouraged to take additional precautions to stay healthy by:

- Getting [tested](#) for COVID-19 if you have [symptoms](#) or were exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Staying home when you are [sick](#) and seeking [treatment](#) if you are at high risk or experiencing severe illness.

All Wisconsinites should continue to follow guidance associated with [X city/County/Tribal community]'s COVID-19 Community Level.

While the virus that causes COVID-19 continues to circulate throughout Wisconsin, [X] County's Community Level may change. County residents should be prepared to adjust their COVID-19 prevention strategies if [X] County moves into a low or high COVID-19 Community Level. [X city/County/Tribal community] residents can stay informed about [X] County's COVID-19 Community Level by visiting [insert preferred webpage].

Newsletter







[X County] is currently experiencing a medium [COVID-19 Community Level](#). This means that we are seeing increased reports of individuals experiencing severe illness and hospitalization from COVID-19. While it is not recommended for [X city/County/Tribal community] residents to wear a well-fitting mask in most public indoor settings, individuals may choose to wear one to further reduce risk. Residents are also encouraged to take simple, but important, actions to stay healthy:

- Be sure you are [up to date](#) on COVID-19 vaccines by getting all recommended vaccines and booster doses. This is the most effective way to stay protected!
- Get [tested](#) for COVID-19 if you have [symptoms](#) or were exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Stay home if you feel sick or test positive for COVID-19, and seek treatment if you are at high risk or experiencing severe illness.
- Continue to follow guidance associated with your COVID-19 Community Level.

The CDC's COVID-19 Community Level are a tool that residents can use to plan the actions we can all take to stay healthy and keep our community safe.

[X city/County/Tribal community] residents can stay informed about [X] County's COVID-19 Community Level by visiting, [insert preferred link].

Social Media Graphics

Social Media Graphic	Caption
<p>[NAME] COUNTY IS CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING A MEDIUM COVID-19 COMMUNITY LEVEL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines. • Get tested for COVID-19 if you have symptoms or were exposed to someone with COVID-19. • Stay home when you are sick or test positive for COVID-19. <div>    </div> <p>Stay Up to Date with Vaccinations Get Tested Sick? Stay Home</p> <p>[LTHD Logo]  WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT of HEALTH SERVICES</p>	<p>[X's] COVID-19 Community Level is now MEDIUM. This means that actions we take today can help prevent the spread and protect from severe illness.</p> <p>When we are at a medium COVID-19 Community Level, consider self-testing before meeting with friends or family who may be at high risk for severe COVID-19. It is always safest to meet outside. If you gather indoors keep windows open for good airflow!</p> <p>Learn more about staying safe with a medium COVID-19 Community Level, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html.</p>
<p>MEDIUM COVID-19 COMMUNITY LEVEL</p>  <p> WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT of HEALTH SERVICES</p>	<p>[X County] currently has a MEDIUM COVID-19 Community Level. This means there are increasing numbers of individuals experiencing severe illness and our health care systems are at some risk for less capacity. Consider wearing a well-fitting mask if you or those you typically interact with are at high risk for severe disease. As always, be sure that you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines and that you get tested if you experience any symptoms.</p> <p>Learn more about staying safe in counties with a medium COVID-19 Community Level, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html.</p>

High COVID-19 Community Levels: Resources



Talking Points

- **[insert LTHD] continues to monitor the spread and impact of COVID-19 in [X] County, using the [CDC Community Levels](#) as a measure to help us understand the current risk COVID-19 poses to our community, and determine the prevention steps we recommend people take to protect their own health and the health of others.**
 - CDC community levels are used nationwide to measure the impact of COVID-19 illness on the health of individuals and health care systems in communities.
 - Counties are assigned a COVID-19 Community Level of “low,” “medium,” or “high.”
 - Each county’s COVID-19 Community Level is calculated using three key metrics:
 - New COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.
 - The average percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients in the past 7 days.
 - The number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.
- **[insert county/jurisdiction] is currently designated as having a HIGH Community Level**
 - This means there is the potential for local health care systems to become overwhelmed due to increased levels of severe disease . increased precautions are STRONGLY recommended.
- **During this time, we urge every resident to take critical steps that can protect your own health and the health of our entire community:**
 - Be sure that you are [up to date](#) with COVID-19 vaccines by getting all recommended vaccinations and booster doses. It is not too late to get vaccinated!
 - Know [where to get tested](#) if you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or are exposed to someone with COVID-19. Visit a community testing site or consider keeping [self-tests](#) at home. Order free tests online from the federal government at [COVIDTests.gov](#).
 - Stay home if you are feeling sick or if you test positive for COVID-19. Following the recommended isolation and [quarantine guidelines is critical to keeping others safe in our community](#). For more information about how long to isolate, visit the CDC’s [Quarantine & Isolation Calculator](#).
 - Wear a [well-fitting mask or respirator](#) in public indoor settings, regardless of vaccination status.
 - Maintain good air ventilation within indoor spaces by opening windows and doors, when possible.
 - If you live with someone or frequently visit someone who is at increased risk for COVID-19, protect them by:
 - Wearing a well-fitting mask around them.
 - Using a self-test before gathering. If possible, it is always safer to gather outdoors.
 - If you are at increased risk for severe COVID-19:
 - Talk with a health care provider about whether you need to wear a well-fitting mask or respirator or take additional precautions to prevent COVID-19 including accessing COVID-19 therapeutics. To find a clinic or health care provider near you, dial 2-1-1.
 - Consider staying 6 or more feet away from people in public indoor settings.

Sample Press Release

[County] Is Experiencing High COVID-19 Community Levels

[City/County/Tribal community] residents urged to take precautions, including wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator in public indoor spaces

The [X city/County/Tribal community] has announced [X County] is now experiencing a [high COVID-19 Community Level](#). This means [X city/County/Tribal community] residents should take increased precautions against COVID-19, including wearing a [well-fitting mask or respirator](#) in public indoor settings. During a high

COVID-19 Community Level, there is the potential for local health care systems to become overwhelmed due to increased levels of severe disease.

"To prevent against severe cases that can strain our hospitals, [X city/County/Tribal community] residents should take additional precautions to stay protected against COVID-19," said [Public Health Officer X]. "Wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator in public indoor settings is recommended for everyone, regardless of vaccination status. If you have not received your COVID-19 vaccine or booster dose, please go get it. Getting vaccinated and staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines is the most effective way to prevent severe health outcomes associated with COVID-19."

Taking additional public health precautions, like wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator in public indoor settings, helps prevent the spread of disease, reducing strain on health care systems. Individuals at high-risk for severe illness can talk with a health care provider about taking additional public health precautions, such as avoiding non-essential public indoor spaces. In addition to wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator in public indoor settings, [X city/County/Tribal community] residents should take additional steps to stay healthy, including:

- Ensuring you are [up to date](#) on COVID-19 vaccines by getting all recommended vaccinations and booster doses.
- Getting [tested](#) for COVID-19 if you have [symptoms](#) or were [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19.
- Staying home when you feel [sick or test positive](#) for COVID-19 and seeking [treatment](#) if you are at high risk or experiencing severe illness.

Continuing to follow guidance associated with your COVID-19 Community Level can protect your own health and the health of everyone in [X city/County/Tribal community] especially those who are most vulnerable.

While the virus that causes COVID-19 continues to circulate throughout Wisconsin, [X] County's Community Level may change. County residents can adjust their COVID-19 prevention strategies if [X] County moves into a low or medium COVID-19 Community Level.

[X city/County/Tribal community] residents can stay informed about [X County's] COVID-19 Community Level by visiting, [\[insert preferred link\]](#).

Newsletter

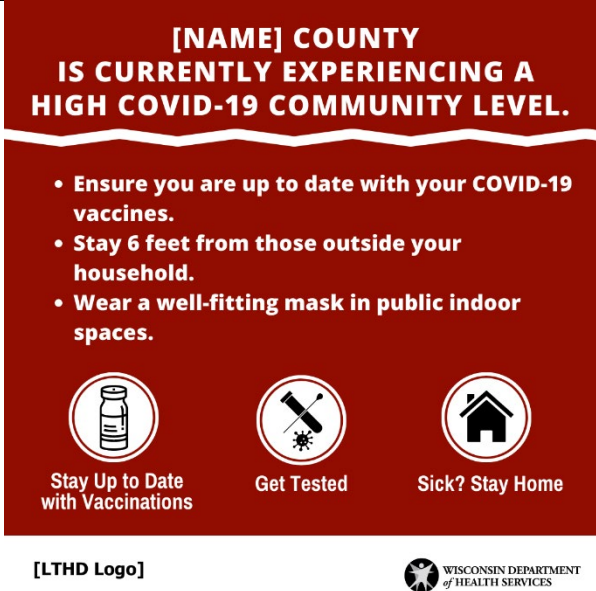




[X County] is currently experiencing a high [COVID-19 Community Level](#). This means the number of individuals experiencing severe illness from COVID-19 has increased, and there is the potential for health care systems to experience strain. With a high COVID-19 Community Level, [X city/County/Tribal community] residents should take additional precautions to prevent the spread of disease and reduce strain on our health care systems by:

- Staying [up to date](#) on COVID-19 vaccines by getting all recommended vaccinations and booster doses.
- Getting [tested](#) for COVID-19 if you have [symptoms](#) or were [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19.
- Staying home if you feel [sick or test positive](#) for COVID-19 and seeking [treatment](#) if you are high-risk for developing severe illness.

Continue to follow guidance associated with your COVID-19 Community Level to plan the prevention and protection strategies to protect your own health and the health of those in [X city/County/Tribal community].

[X city/County/Tribal community] residents can stay informed about [X County's] COVID-19 Community Level by visiting, [\[insert preferred link\]](#).

Social Media Graphics

Social Media Graphic	Caption
 <p>[NAME] COUNTY IS CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING A HIGH COVID-19 COMMUNITY LEVEL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines. • Stay 6 feet from those outside your household. • Wear a well-fitting mask in public indoor spaces. <div>    </div> <p>Stay Up to Date with Vaccinations Get Tested Sick? Stay Home</p> <p>[LTHD Logo]  WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT of HEALTH SERVICES</p>	<p>[X city/County/Tribal community] is experiencing HIGH COVID-19 Community Levels. Everyone should wear a well-fitting mask in public indoor spaces. Always be sure that you are up to date on your vaccinations, get tested if you feel sick or are exposed, and stay home when you feel sick or if you test positive.</p> <p>If you are at high risk for severe disease, talk with a health care provider about whether you are a candidate for preventive treatments. Dial 2-1-1 to find a health care provider near you.</p>

Decision Making Resources

DHS has developed the following fact sheets to help LTHDs explain what prevention strategies community members should take depending on their county's COVID-19 Community Level. LTHDs are encouraged to share the following resources with community partners or post these fact sheets to their websites.

Let's Gather Safely



COVID-19 has had a devastating impact around the world and across Wisconsin. However, with high levels of population immunity and the availability of new public health tools, we can feel safer knowing the risk of severe COVID-19 disease, hospitalization, and death have been greatly reduced. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed COVID-19 Community Levels to guide decisions about COVID-19 prevention measures based on county data. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) supports individuals and communities using COVID-19 Community Levels to inform their COVID-19 prevention strategies. Learn what the COVID-19 Community Level is in your county, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html.

In counties with Low COVID-19 Community Levels:

- ◆ DHS encourages everyone to stay up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.
- ◆ Stay home and get tested if you are feeling sick or have COVID-19 symptoms. If your test result is positive, isolate at home. If your test result is negative, it is best to wait until you are symptom free for at least 24 hours before leaving your house.
- ◆ If you were exposed to COVID-19 and are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccines, quarantine and wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from your date of last exposure to COVID-19.
- ◆ Wearing a well-fitting mask indoors is not necessary, but continue to wear one if it makes you feel safer.

In counties with Medium COVID-19 Community Levels:

- ◆ DHS encourages everyone to stay up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.
- ◆ Stay home and get tested if you are feeling sick or have COVID-19 symptoms. If your test result is positive, isolate at home. If your test result is negative, it is best to wait until you are symptom free for at least 24 hours before leaving your house.
- ◆ If you were exposed to COVID-19 and are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccines, quarantine and wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from your date of last exposure to COVID-19.
- ◆ Wearing a well-fitting mask indoors is not necessary, but continue to wear one if it makes you feel safer. If you are at high-risk for severe illness, talk with your health care provider about wearing a mask in public indoor spaces and taking additional public health precautions.

In counties with High COVID-19 Community Levels:

- ◆ DHS encourages everyone to stay up-to-date with their COVID-19 vaccines.
- ◆ Stay home and get tested if you are feeling sick or have COVID-19 symptoms. If your test result is positive, isolate at home. If your test result is negative, it is best to wait until you are symptom free for at least 24 hours before leaving your house.
- ◆ If you were exposed to COVID-19 and are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccines, quarantine and wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from your date of last exposure to COVID-19.
- ◆ Everyone should wear a well-fitting mask or respirator in public indoor spaces.
- ◆ If you are at high-risk for severe illness, talk with your health care provider and consider taking additional public health precautions., such as avoiding non-essential indoor activities in public.

Make Activities Safe



With high levels of population immunity and the availability of new public health tools, we can feel safer knowing the risk of severe COVID-19 disease, hospitalization, and death have been greatly reduced. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed COVID-19 Community Levels to guide decisions about COVID-19 prevention measures based on county data. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) supports individuals and communities using COVID-19 Community Levels to inform their COVID-19 prevention strategies. Learn what the COVID-19 Community Level is in your county,

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html.

	Low <i>Limited impact on health care system and low levels of severe disease.</i>	Medium <i>Some impact on health care system and more people are experiencing severe illness.</i>	High <i>High potential for health care system to be strained and high levels of severe illness.</i>
Indoor Gatherings	Masks are not necessary while gathering with family and friends. Make sure you remain up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations.	Masks are not necessary but you may wear one if it makes you more comfortable. Gather in spaces with good air ventilation and windows and doors when possible.	Everyone, regardless of vaccination, status should wear a well-fitting mask in public indoor spaces. Practice social distancing and consider taking a COVID-19 self test before gathering.
Traveling	Wearing a well-fitting mask and respirator is recommended for everyone traveling on public transportation. Know the COVID-19 Community Level guidance of your destination.	Wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator is recommended on public transportation. Check destination's COVID-19 guidance and consider using a COVID-19 self test before travelling if you are not up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines. Take additional precautions if you are at high risk for severe disease.	Everyone, regardless of vaccination, status should wear a well-fitting mask in public spaces. Practice social distancing and make sure you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines. Consider using a COVID-19 self test before travelling if you are not up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines.
Medical appointments	Masks are still required in health care facilities, medical, and dental offices. Bring a well-fitting mask to your appointment.	Masks are still required in health care facilities, medical, and dental offices. Bring a well-fitting mask to your appointment. Consider using a COVID-19 self-test before your appointment.	Masks are still required in health care facilities, medical, and dental offices. Bring a well-fitting mask to your appointment. Re-schedule if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
Outdoor activities	You do not need to wear a mask when you are outside.	It is not necessary to wear a mask outside, but you may wear one if it makes you feel more comfortable. Consider using a COVID-19 self test if you are at high risk for severe disease and plan to be around other people.	It is recommended you mask while in close proximity to others and socially distance when possible. Make sure you remain up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines and take additional precautions if you are at high risk for disease.