

## US COVID cases pass 6 million, with infections rising in youths

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(HealthDay)—As the number of coronavirus cases in the United states

passed the dubious milestone of 6 million on Sunday, a new report shows COVID-19 is now spreading at a faster rate in children and teenagers than among the general public.

The troubling data, from the American Academy of Pediatrics, comes just as schools and universities around the country are reopening for fall classes.

Since the start of the summer, every state in the country has witnessed an increase in the number of young people who have tested positive for coronavirus. In late May, about 5 percent of the nation's cases were recorded in minors, the *The New York Times* reported. By Aug. 20, that number had risen to more than 9 percent.

Young children seem to catch and transmit the virus less often than adults, but Dr. Sean O'Leary, vice chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics' committee on infectious diseases, told the *Times* that community spread in many parts of the United States this summer has corresponded with more infections among children.

After reports of outbreaks at summer camps, it is clear that the virus can spread among children under certain circumstances, Dr. William Raszka Jr., a pediatric infectious disease expert at the University of Vermont's College of Medicine, told the *Times*. He worries about opening schools in places where infection rates are high.

"One of the challenges is that you just can't separate schools from the community," Raszka said. "When there's a really high prevalence rate in the community and you open schools, there's going to be a lot of transmission in schools."

Debunking the theory that more testing is the only reason why more kids are now being diagnosed with COVID-19, O'Leary told the *Times* there

is evidence that minors are truly being infected at a higher rate now than earlier in the year because hospitalizations and deaths among children had increased as well.

"Anyone who has been on the front lines of this pandemic in a children's hospital can tell you we've taken care of lots of kids that are very sick," O'Leary told the *Times*. "Yes, it's less severe in children than adults, but it's not completely benign."

## **Trump claims COVID vaccine will be ready before end of the year**

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump announced last week that his administration will have a coronavirus vaccine ready for Americans before the year ends.

The lofty promise came during his acceptance speech on the final night of the Republican National Convention.

The pledge is ambitious by any measure. Several companies are vying for vaccine approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration by the end of this year or by early 2021, but approval is just the beginning, the *Times* reported. People must be willing to take the vaccine, and there must be enough doses produced to be distributed widely.

Medical experts noted that the audience setting for Trump's speech posed the danger of community spread and set another bad example when Americans are being told they need to continue to wear masks, maintain social distancing and limit large gatherings, the *Washington Post* reported.

In a development that suggests there may be more than one way to stop

the spread of COVID-19, University of Arizona officials reported last week that they may have prevented an outbreak of COVID-19 on campus with a novel testing technique: They are screening the sewage from each dorm for any evidence of coronavirus.

When a wastewater sample from one dorm came back positive this week, the school quickly tested all 311 people who live and work there and found two asymptomatic students who tested positive, the *Post* reported. They were quickly quarantined.

"With this early detection, we jumped on it right away, tested those youngsters, and got them the appropriate isolation where they needed to be," said Richard Carmona, a former U.S. surgeon general who is directing the school's reentry task force.

## **FDA approves new rapid coronavirus test**

In other positive testing news, the first rapid coronavirus test that doesn't need special computer equipment to produce results was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration last week.

Made by Abbott Laboratories, the 15-minute test will sell for \$5, giving it an edge over similar tests that need to be popped into a small machine, the *Associated Press* reported. No larger than a credit card, the Abbott test is based on the same technology used to test for the flu, strep throat and other infections.

On Thursday, the White House announced a \$760 million deal with Abbott to produce 150 million of the rapid tests.

BinaxNOW is the fourth rapid test in the United States that detects COVID-19 antigens, proteins found on the surface of the coronavirus, rather than the virus itself, the *AP* reported. It's considered a faster, but

less precise, screening method.

Abbott's entry into the rapid COVID-19 test market offers yet another option to expand testing, the *AP* reported. The FDA also recently gave its blessing to a saliva test from Yale University that bypasses some of the supplies that have led to testing bottlenecks, the wire service said. Neither test can be performed at home.

But several companies are developing rapid at-home tests, though none have yet won FDA approval, the *AP* reported. Abbott's new test still requires a nasal swab be taken by a health worker, like most older coronavirus tests. The Yale saliva [test](#) eliminates the need for a swab, but can only be run at high-grade laboratories.

Since the start of the pandemic, nasal swab tests that are sent to a lab have been the standard for COVID-19 screening. While considered highly accurate, the tests rely on expensive, specialized machines and chemicals. Shortages of those supplies have led to repeated delays in reporting results, the *AP* reported.

"Those [rapid] screening tests are what we need in schools, workplaces and nursing homes in order to catch asymptomatic spreaders," Dr. Jonathan Quick, an adjunct professor of global health at Duke University in North Carolina, told the wire service.

## **Thousands of cases reported on college campuses**

More testing could not come soon enough: Just weeks after colleges across the United States began to reopen their campuses for the fall semester, a new survey showed that thousands of coronavirus infections are cropping up in students and staff alike.

More than 1,500 American colleges and universities were tallied in the

*Times* survey. They included every four-year public institution, every private college that competes in NCAA sports and others that identified cases. The case total: More than 26,000 cases and 64 deaths have been reported since the pandemic began, the *Times* reported.

By Monday, the U.S. coronavirus case count passed 6 million as the death toll neared 183,000, according to a *Times* tally.

According to the same tally, the top five states in coronavirus cases as of Monday were: California with nearly 706,500; Texas with more than 636,500; Florida with almost 621,500; New York with nearly 439,000; and Georgia with nearly 253,000.

Elsewhere in the world, the situation remains challenging.

On Monday, India surpassed Mexico in the number of deaths caused by the coronavirus. The nation of 1.3 billion people now has the world's third-highest death toll at 64,469, according to the *Times*. It is behind only Brazil and the United States. With India's new infections exceeding 75,000 for the past five days, the virus appears to be tightening its grip on that country, the newspaper said.

Brazil is also a hotspot in the [coronavirus](#) pandemic, with over 3.8 million confirmed infections by Monday, according to the Hopkins tally. It has the second-highest number of cases, behind only the United States.

Cases are also spiking in Russia: As of Monday, that country reported the world's fourth-highest number of COVID-19 cases, at over 999,400, the Hopkins tally showed.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 25.2 million on Monday, with nearly 847,000 deaths, according to the Hopkins tally.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [new coronavirus](#).

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