

COVID-19 hospitalizations in U.S. hit record high

December 1 2020, by Ernie Mundell and Robin Foster Healthday
Reporters



(HealthDay)—Yet another grim record for COVID-19 hospitalizations was set on Monday, as more than 96,000 patients battled severe cases of the virus in hospital wards across America.

Counts of new coronavirus infections and fatalities have slowed in the past few days, a common occurrence over holidays and weekends due to delays in testing and reporting, the *Washington Post* reported.

But the number of hospitalizations have risen by more than 12 percent over the past week, the newspaper noted.

Nineteen states—Oregon, Maine, New Hampshire, West Virginia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Alabama, North Carolina, Arkansas, Tennessee, Ohio, Rhode Island, Alaska, Virginia, Nevada, Minnesota, Kentucky and Indiana—reported record numbers of hospitalizations on Monday, the *Post* reported. Meanwhile, California, New York and Arizona each reported more than a 25 percent increase in the average number of hospitalizations.

On Monday, Rhode Island became the latest state to begin sending patients to a temporary field hospital due to rising demand for beds, while New York officials told hospitals to begin emergency measures that include identifying retired staff who can return to work and figuring out ways to expand their bed capacity by 50 percent. California Gov. Gavin Newsom warned that the state's intensive care units were already two-thirds full and could reach 112 percent capacity by mid-December, the *Post* reported.

As health officials brace for still another surge in cases following Thanksgiving gatherings across the country, some Americans returning from the holiday break faced strict new coronavirus containment measures on Monday, the *Associated Press* reported.

Los Angeles County imposed a stay-at-home order for its 10 million residents, and Santa Clara County, in the heart of Silicon Valley, banned high school, college and professional sports and told those who have traveled more than 150 miles outside the county they must quarantine, the *AP* said. The order will last three weeks, ending December 20, *CNN* reported.

All 10 million residents affected have been asked to stay home as much as possible and wear face masks when outside—even when exercising at the beach and parks. The order also reduces the maximum occupancy for essential businesses to 35%, and for non-essential businesses, personal care services, and libraries to 20%. The directive includes a controversial new ban on outdoor dining on Los Angeles County, *CNN* reported.

"The red flags are flying in terms of the trajectory in our projections of growth," California Gov. Gavin Newsom told residents. "If these trends continue, we're going to have to take much more dramatic, arguably drastic, action."

In Hawaii, the mayor of Hawaii County said travelers arriving without a negative COVID-19 test must quarantine for 14 days, and even those who have tested virus-free may be randomly selected for another test upon arrival, the *AP* reported. New Jersey is suspending all youth sports.

Health experts had pleaded with Americans to stay home over Thanksgiving and not gather with anyone who didn't live with them. Still, almost 1.2 million people passed through U.S. airports on Sunday, the most since the pandemic gripped the country in March, while others took to the highways to be with family and friends, the *AP* reported.

Fauci warns of another COVID surge after

Thanksgiving

After millions of Americans chose to travel for Thanksgiving, Dr. Anthony Fauci warned on Sunday that a "surge superimposed upon" a surge of coronavirus cases will likely follow.

Fauci and other public health officials stressed the importance of wearing masks and practicing social distancing, the *Post* reported.

"It's going to get worse over the next several weeks, but the actions that we take in the next several days will determine how bad it is or whether or not we continue to flatten our curve," U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams told *Fox News*.

White House coronavirus task force coordinator Deborah Birx told *CBS News* that the number of coronavirus cases is "three, four and 10 times" as high as it was during the pandemic's second surge after Memorial Day weekend.

"It looked like things were starting to improve in our northern plain states, and now with Thanksgiving, we're worried that all of that will be reversed," Birx said.

The number of coronavirus-related deaths are nearing record levels in the United States, Adm. Brett Giroir, assistant secretary of health and human services, told *CNN*.

As for the future, "we really have to see what this weekend looks like. I can't really project that," Giroir told *CNN*.

In a bit of good news, the first wave of vaccinations is expected to begin for targeted groups in a matter of weeks, the *Post* reported.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advisory committee on immunization practices will meet Tuesday to vote on coronavirus vaccine priority rankings. Health-care workers are likely to be the first to receive the vaccine once it has been approved, the *Post* reported. Priority is also likely to be given to nursing home residents and staff, followed by other vulnerable populations. Giroir predicted that the United States should have enough vaccine to immunize 20 million Americans by the end of the year.

"We have to immunize for impact," he said. "The rest of America will get it in the second quarter, third quarter of 2021, but we can maximize our impact right now."

Moderna to request emergency approval for its vaccine

Meanwhile, Moderna applied on Monday for emergency use authorization of its coronavirus vaccine and the first shots could be given as early as Dec. 21, *The New York Times* reported.

Moderna's application is based on data showing that its vaccine is 94.1 percent effective, and that its study of 30,000 people has met the scientific criteria needed to determine whether the vaccine works. The finding from the complete set of data is in line with earlier data that found the vaccine to be 94.5 percent effective, the *Times* said.

Not only that, the vaccine was 100 percent effective at preventing severe disease from the coronavirus, Moderna officials said. The product was developed in collaboration with government researchers from the Vaccine Research Center at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

The company is "on track" to produce 20 million doses by the end of December, and 500 million to a billion in 2021, the newspaper reported. Each person requires two doses, administered a month apart, so 20 million doses will be enough for 10 million people.

Earlier this month, Pfizer asked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the same emergency use approval. Pfizer has said it can produce up to 50 million doses this year, with about half going to the United States, the *Times* reported. Its vaccine also requires two doses per person.

A global scourge

By Tuesday, the U.S. coronavirus case count passed 13.6 million while the death toll passed 268,000, according to a *Times* tally. According to the same tally, the top five states in coronavirus cases as of Tuesday were: Texas and California with just over 1.2 million cases each; Florida with over 999,000; Illinois with more than 727,800; and New York with over 652,700.

Curbing the spread of the coronavirus in the rest of the world remains challenging.

Many European countries are tightening restrictions, the *AP* reported. France has entered a nationwide lockdown, and Germany and Austria have started partial lockdowns as government officials across the continent scramble to slow a sharp rise in infections that threatens to overwhelm their health care systems.

England has followed suit, while Italy, Greece and Kosovo also announced new measures, the *AP* reported.

Things are no better in India, where the coronavirus case count has passed 9.4 million on Tuesday, a Johns Hopkins University tally showed.

More than 137,600 coronavirus patients have died in India, according to the Hopkins tally, but when measured as a proportion of the population, the country has had far fewer deaths than many others. Doctors say this reflects India's younger and leaner population. Still, the country's public health system is severely strained, and some sick patients cannot find hospital beds, the *Times* said. Only the United States has more [coronavirus](#) cases.

Meanwhile, Brazil passed 6.3 million cases and had over 173,000 deaths as of Tuesday, the Hopkins tally showed.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 63 million on Tuesday, with more than 1.4 million deaths recorded, 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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