

Mississippi health system buckles under 'astounding' rise in COVID cases

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(HealthDay)—An "astounding" rise in COVID-19 cases in Mississippi is

putting intense strain on the state's health care system.

Compared to the first half of July, the number of infections more than doubled in the past two weeks and deaths rose by 51%. In Mississippi, deaths lost to COVID-19 now average between three and four a day, [health officials](#) said at a news conference held Wednesday, *The New York Times* reported.

More than 300 COVID-19 patients are currently in [intensive care](#) or on a ventilator, compared with a few dozen at the start of July. In hospitals where intensive care units are full, some patients are being treated in emergency rooms, according to the officials.

Mirroring moves made earlier in the pandemic, hospitals in Mississippi have been ordered to delay some elective surgeries and to transfer patients to other facilities with available beds when necessary, the *Times* reported.

Many [health care workers](#) are "absolutely worn out" and some hospital nurses are quitting, which could make dealing with the ongoing spike more difficult, warned Dr. Thomas Dobbs, the state health officer.

The recent surge in daily infections is "astounding," said Dr. Paul Byers, the state epidemiologist, the *Times* reported.

Byers singled out 72 long-term-care facilities where unvaccinated workers have been largely spreading the virus, but also blamed settings such as summer schools and cheerleading camps.

He added that it's likely that cases will continue to rise in the coming weeks. When asked where outbreaks are most severe, Byers said: "We are covered up with outbreaks," the *Times* reported.

Mississippi's efforts to get the situation under control are being hampered by rampant misinformation about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines, Dobbs said.

Fewer than half of adults in the state have received at least one shot, the lowest rate in the nation, the *Times* noted.

"We're going to make the vaccine available, but you know, there's a mountain of opposition to us from some folks," Dobbs said. "We have gotten ourselves into this mess together, and we need to get ourselves out together."

More information: There's more on COVID-19 at the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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