

# Arkansas reports new record for COVID-19 hospitalizations

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In this Tuesday, June 22, 2021, file photo, Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson testifies before a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Capitol Hill, in Washington. Facing growing resistance to vaccinations, the governors of Arkansas and Ohio are among several governors asking the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to grant full approval to coronavirus vaccines in the hope that it will persuade more people to get the shot. Credit: AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta, File

Arkansas on Monday set a new record for the number of people in the state hospitalized because of COVID-19 as its coronavirus surge continued.

The state reported its COVID-19 hospitalizations rose by 103, its biggest one-day increase, to 1,376. The state's previous record during the pandemic for COVID-19 hospitalizations was in January when it reported 1,371 virus patients in the hospital.

The Department of Health reported that there are only eight intensive care unit beds available in the state. There are 509 COVID-19 patients in ICUs around the state and 286 on ventilators.

"Today's report shows some very startling numbers," Gov. Asa Hutchinson tweeted.

Arkansas ranks third in the country for new virus cases per capita, according to numbers compiled by Johns Hopkins University researchers. The state's cases have been skyrocketing in recent weeks, fueled by the delta variant of the virus and the state's low vaccination rate.

Only about 37% of the state's population is fully vaccinated against the virus.

The state's COVID-19 surge has been straining resources at hospitals around the state.

"The staff is working multiple overtime shifts and they're worn out," state Human Services Secretary Cindy Gillespie told a legislative panel that approved using \$129 million in federal COVID-19 relief funds to aid hospitals.

Arkansas Children's Hospital said 27 children were hospitalized with COVID-19, the highest it has seen since the pandemic began, surpassing the record it set two weeks ago. Twelve of the patients are in intensive care and eight are on ventilators.

The spike in hospitalizations came days after an Arkansas judge temporarily blocked the state from enforcing a law that prevents schools and other governmental bodies from imposing mask mandates.

The majority-Republican Legislature last week refused to change the law despite Hutchinson calling on them to roll it back for some schools. Hutchinson, a Republican, signed the law in April, but has said he regrets that decision.

The Fayetteville School Board on Monday approved a mask mandate for the [school](#) year. The eStem and Lisa Academy [public charter schools](#) also announced over the weekend they would require teachers and students to wear masks. Hours after Fox's ruling, the Fayetteville City Council voted to require masks in city-owned facilities and some public places.

The state on Monday reported 21 new COVID-19 deaths.

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