

U.S. nursing home deaths rise as Delta spreads

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(HealthDay News)—There has been a significant increase in COVID-

related deaths in nursing homes as the highly contagious Delta spreads across the country, a new analysis shows.

"While the vast majority of COVID-19 deaths happened outside of nursing homes in July and August, the high rate of increase within nursing homes indicates that residents and staff in these settings are at risk of [death](#) during the Delta surge," the Kaiser Family Foundation [report](#) found.

The numbers of nursing home deaths are still down significantly from their peak in late 2020, but the 1,800 residents and staff who died in August from the virus was the highest number in six months. The analysis did not include data on the numbers of those who died were vaccinated.

"Vaccinations are very strongly protecting people in these facilities, but the Delta variant did have an impact," study co-author Priya Chidambaram told *The New York Times*, adding that the increase in nursing home deaths in August was much steeper than in the communities surrounding them.

The American Health Care Association, a leading nursing home trade group, said infections were largely the result of a high number of cases in the surrounding community, noting that they "are largely happening in communities where there is high spread and low vaccination rates among the general population."

"We're still nowhere near our peak in December 2020, nor at any point last year, thanks to safe and effective vaccines as well as providers' ongoing vaccination efforts and infection control measures," the association said in a statement, the *Times* reported.

Vaccination campaigns may have helped reduce deaths from a high of

22,000 last December and January to 300 for June and July, before rising in August. Preliminary data from September suggest that deaths may be falling from their August numbers.

The vaccination rate among nursing home residents is nearly 85%, but only about 65% of nursing home employees are vaccinated.

"The rate of increase among staff is slower than among residents," Chidambaram said.

The number of deaths shows the importance of getting booster shots to nursing home residents who are more vulnerable to COVID because of their older ages and health conditions, the *Times* reported. The rising numbers could increase the call to require vaccinating nursing [home](#) workers sooner, the story said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has [more on COVID-19](#).

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