

North Carolina Long-Term Care Facilities Data Show Dramatic Impact of COVID-19 Vaccination

By Administrator

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As COVID-19 cases surged this summer fueled by the Delta variant, hospitalizations and deaths among residents in North Carolina long-term care facilities were significantly lower than during the winter surge, as shown in data from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. The decrease in cases and severe illness can be attributed to vaccination for residents and staff of long-term care facilities and to the work done by long-term care providers to implement measures to protect staff and residents from COVID-19. While reported COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care facilities increased during July through September of 2021, average weekly cases decreased by 89%, hospitalizations decreased by 93% and deaths decreased by 95% when compared to November and December of 2020, when most long-term care residents were not vaccinated. As of last week, more than 80% of long-term care facility residents have been fully vaccinated.

Additional data on outbreaks further demonstrate the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines. Currently, outbreaks in long-term care facilities are smaller in size and have fewer associated deaths compared to any other time during the pandemic. Additionally, comparing those same time periods shows the duration of outbreaks in long-term care facilities has decreased. Summary case counts and long-term care facilities currently in outbreak status can be found in the weekly Outbreaks and Clusters report.

“This data from our long-term care facilities is more evidence that vaccines save lives,” said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. “Don’t wait until it’s too late. Get vaccinated to protect against COVID-19 and help your friends and loved ones to do the same.”

Since the start of the pandemic, NCDHHS’ COVID-19 response included a comprehensive strategy for long-term care facilities, including prevention, staffing, testing, outbreak management, vaccination and oversight. The state created 10 regional infection prevention teams to support facilities and local health departments. These teams completed on-site infection prevention and control assessments and education in more than 1,600 long-term care facilities.

Additionally, the state provided personal protective equipment, helped fill staffing shortages, provided infection prevention and control training, targeted funding, mandated testing, facilitated vaccine administration and completed infection control inspections in North Carolina’s more than 400 nursing homes.

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COVID-19 vaccines offer significant protection against serious illness, hospitalization and death. People who are not fully vaccinated are 20 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than people who are fully vaccinated.