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District COVID-19 Cases At All Time High

VALDOSTA – South Health District is currently experiencing the most significant increase in COVID-19 cases that the district has seen since the pandemic began.

The positivity rate across the district has increased to 15-27% in the last two weeks. An increase of up to 10 percent from earlier this month and double or more the positivity rate from October.

“These numbers are absolutely stunning, and we know that we have just started to see cases from the Christmas holiday which means this will likely continue to increase,” said William R. Grow, MD, FACP, district health director. “It is extremely important to take precautions, stay home, avoid social gatherings, and wear a mask if you must go out in public, especially as we conclude the holiday season. Positivity rate increases like this are going to translate into overwhelmed hospitals, critical illnesses and possibly deaths. All of this can be avoided if people will simply take the precautions that public health has been recommending since March.”

Testing rates in the district have continued to increase since October, with public health and hospital testing sites being extremely busy in the last several weeks. This increase in testing is important because it allows public health to have an accurate view of the positivity rate within the district.

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) wants to remind everyone of the importance of continuing precautions.

Practice social distancing – keep at least 6 feet between yourself and other people.

Wash your hands – use soap and water and scrub for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60% alcohol) if soap and water aren’t readily available.

Wear a mask – The CDC recommends the use of face masks or simple cloth face coverings to help slow the spread of COVID-19, especially where social distancing is difficult to maintain (grocery stores, pharmacies, etc.).

Answer the call - If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, public health will call you and ask you to self-quarantine at home for 14 days from the day that you were exposed. Do your part to keep your family and your community safe: answer the call to slow the spread.

Get your flu shot - Due to the similarities between flu and COVID, it is more important this year than ever to get your flu shot. Every individual over the age of six months should get a flu vaccine – not just for their own protection, but to protect others around them who may be more vulnerable to the flu and its complications.

Health Departments within our district are now taking COVID-19 vaccine appointments for TIER 1A ONLY. Tier 1A includes frontline healthcare workers, first responders that respond to medical calls, and

medical providers. Proof of healthcare employment is required. Healthcare workers, call your health department today to schedule your appointment.

Free COVID-19 testing continues to be available in all 10 counties across the Georgia Department of Public Health's South Health District. The South Health District includes Ben Hill, Berrien, Brooks, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Tift and Turner Counties.

Self-registration for COVID testing is available online at covid19.dph.ga.gov.

For the most up-to-date information on Covid-19 vaccination and public health's response within our district, please visit our website www.southhealthdistrict.com. We will also post all updates to our social media accounts and we encourage everyone to like and/or follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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