



## BELL COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

201 North 8th Street • Temple, TX 76501  
254-773-4457 • Fax 254-773-7535  
[www.bellcountyhealth.org](http://www.bellcountyhealth.org)

Nikki Morrow, IBCLC, RLC  
Interim BCPHD Director  
WIC Program Director

Janice Smith, MD  
Health Authority

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Bell County Public Health District Changes Covid-19 Threat Level

Bell County Public Health District will change the Covid-19 Threat Level from Level 3 (Moderate) to Level 2 (Significant) due to the increasing incidence rate.

The Bell County Public Health District tracks local COVID-19 data and reports to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) for the state dashboard. The local dashboard can be found on the health district website, [www.bellcountyhealth.org](http://www.bellcountyhealth.org).

Bell County began to see a decrease in active cases starting in early October 2021 after the Delta surge over the summer. The latest surge over the last couple of weeks has once again increased active cases and the incidence rate like what was seen in early August 2021. The Bell County Public Health District dashboard showed the rate jump to over 300 late last week after the holidays.

“We strongly encourage full vaccination and a booster dose if eligible. The vaccines provide a layer of protection which can prevent or reduce the severity of Covid-19, including death. Currently, due to significant spread of COVID-19, we encourage added layers of protection by wearing a mask especially when in crowded areas.” Interim Health District Director Nikki Morrow said.

Due to of the increased contagiousness of the Omicron variant compared to earlier variants, proper mask use in indoor areas is critical, and recommended even for those who have been vaccinated, but especially those who have not completed the vaccine series or had a booster. Dr. Janice Smith, Local Health Authority for Bell County, recommends the use of high-quality well-fitting masks, e.g., a 3-ply surgical type mask or KN95 or N95 mask. “Single ply cloth masks and bandanas are simply not very effective against this variant.” Dr. Janice Smith, Local Health Authority for BCPHD said.

Widespread vaccination is a critical tool in protection against COVID-19, especially for those at highest risk from severe illness, and death. Additional layered protection strategies such as masking, social distancing, avoiding crowded areas, frequent hand washing, and monitoring your daily health are also important steps to slowing the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 vaccines have been found to be very safe and effective and are being continuously monitored by the FDA with the most comprehensive and intense safety monitoring program in U.S. history.

Dr. Smith also recommends that anyone who has been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19 closely follow the recently revised recommendations for isolation or quarantine. “While allowing persons to return to work after only 5 days of quarantine or isolation if they are not having symptoms, the individual must wear a mask for an additional 5 days. For those unable or unwilling to wear a mask, the isolation and quarantine periods are still 10 days. We are hopeful these changes will cause less disruption to our workforce while keeping our community safer.” Dr. Janice Smith, Local Health Authority for BCPHD said.



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Please consult your health care provider or primary care physician for questions on COVID-19 vaccines. To find a COVID-19 vaccine near you or for frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19 vaccines, please visit [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov), or call 1-800-232-0233. You can also TEXT your zip code to 438829 to find a vaccine location near you. To reach the COVID-19 Helpline, call 2-1-1 and select option 6, call 1-877-570-9779 or visit [www.211texas.org](http://www.211texas.org).