

Dr. Marjorie Bessel Press Conference Sept. 8

Good afternoon.

As I am sure you have seen on state and county health department dashboards, COVID hospital admissions have stabilized in most Banner markets over the past couple of weeks. That means that we are not seeing exponential growth like we were in previous weeks. This is also the case for pediatric COVID hospitalizations.

Forecasting models used by Banner Health predicted that hospitalizations would slow down around this time. They also indicate substantial increases next month. These models can be influenced by your behaviors. My message today will be the same as prior weeks. Please get vaccinated to reduce the burden of illness for yourself and for our health care heroes. Wear a mask when at school and indoors.

Last week we received questions from you regarding our pediatric patients. We looked into these inquiries and here is what we found. During the month of August, the average age of our pediatric patients who were hospitalized with COVID was 8 years old. When we pulled a vaccination report last week, 100% of hospitalized COVID patients under the age of 20 were unvaccinated. We would expect this number to be higher than in our adult population due to children under 12 being ineligible for vaccination at this time.

We are also watching closely the coinfection rates of COVID and RSV. Currently only 5% of our pediatric COVID patients are also testing positive for RSV. This is quite different than what some hospitals are seeing in other parts of the country like Texas, where about half of their pediatric COVID patients are also testing positive for RSV.

RSV continues to be of high concern for the pediatric population. RSV hospitalizations and emergency room visits at Banner have increased in the past 3 weeks, with a significant increase over the past 4 days. As a reminder, this is an unseasonable spike. Typically, RSV is not a big concern during summer months.

Emergency rooms in Banner markets are quite busy caring for COVID and non-COVID patients. For this reason, wait times might be longer than usual. This does not mean that you should avoid emergency services. We still highly recommend that you go to the nearest emergency room for any life-threatening illnesses or injuries. We also recommend that you consider alternate care sites like primary or urgent care locations if you are experiencing non-life-threatening issues.

As always, I will close out my opening remarks with my asks for all of you. Please get your COVID vaccine as soon as possible. Please also get your flu shot. It is strongly recommended that you get your flu shot in September or October to provide you with maximum protection against influenza. Lastly, stay home if

you are experiencing symptoms that might suggest respiratory illness and book an appointment to get tested for COVID as soon as possible.

By receiving an early diagnosis of COVID, many can qualify for monoclonal antibody treatment. More information about this treatment can be found on [bannerhealth.com](https://www.bannerhealth.com). We offer it at multiple outpatient locations within Banner Health. Since starting this treatment in December of 2020, we have administered it to more than 5,700 patients, reducing their risk of hospitalization and death.

Thank you.