Florida reports biggest one-day COVID-19 spike

Chris Persaud Palm Beach Post | USA TODAY NETWORK

Florida added more than 21,000 new coronavirus infections to its caseload Saturday, the biggest one-day increase the state has recorded to date.

The state reported 21,683 new COVID-19 cases to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Florida no longer publishes daily data on its health department website but still sends statistics to the CDC.

Most of the new cases are of unvaccinated people under 50, Palm Beach County's health director said Saturday.

Saturday's spike represents the largest single-day statewide surge since Jan. 7, when the state recorded 19,334 new cases. Florida added 30,531 new cases on Jan. 2 but skipped Jan. 1, so those new cases spanned both days.

Florida has logged 2,590,699 coronavirus infections and 39,079 deaths as of Friday among state residents. That does not take into account people from other places who got sick or died in Florida because of the virus.

Anyone trying to find daily updates for the state must go to a CDC web page that is not displayed prominently on its website: data.cdc.gov/Case-Surveillance /United-States-COVID-19-Cases-and-Deaths-by-State-o/9mfqcb36/ data.

That page shows the number of new COVID-19 infections and deaths each state reports to the federal agency daily. Once there, information-seekers must click "filter," select "state," and type in "FL" to instruct the website to display only data for Florida.

Gov. Ron DeSantis has resisted mandatory mask mandates and vaccine requirements, and along with the Republican-controlled Florida Legislature, has limited local officials' ability to impose measures meant to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The figures from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Saturday showed how quickly the number of cases is rising in the Sunshine State. Only a day earlier, Florida reported 17,093 new daily cases.

Driven by the highly infectious delta variant of the coronavirus, Florida has become the U.S. hotspot for new cases and deaths.

Florida reported 258,783 new infections to the CDC for all of July, more than 256,284 logged by California and Texas combined. Those two states are more populated than Florida. One in five new infections nationwide in July were discovered in Florida.

Florida's death toll soared by 1,166 people in July, more than the 1,073 recorded by California, Texas and New York combined. Florida accounted for about one in six of the new deaths documented nationwide in July, the data collected by the CDC shows.

People who haven't been vaccinated against COVID- 19 account for more than 99% of the disease's new victims nationwide, the country's top infectious disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci has said.

Less than 1% of newly infected people across Palm Beach County had been vaccinated, Dr. Alina Alonso, director of the state-run county Department of Health has said.

"Most of the new cases and those seen in the hospital are unvaccinated individuals 20-49 years of age," Alonso told The Palm Beach Post on Saturday.

Inoculations slumped from April to early July statewide. But the pace of injections has picked up in the past few weeks as the delta mutation drives the latest surge.

Florida added 287,401 more people to its immunization count in the past week, the state health department reported Friday. That's higher than the weekly total of 137,273 it logged July 9.

"Please, get vaccinated if you have not done so, for you, your family and your community," Alonso urged.