

COVID-19 hospitalizations top 100,000 daily average in US

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30 August 2021

Average daily hospitalizations in the United States due to COVID-19 have topped the 100,000 mark for the first time since last winter, the federal Department of Health and Human Services has reported. Hospitalizations are up 500 percent over the past two months.

The statistic is an ominous milestone of an impending surge in deaths, which have already passed the mark of 1,000 per day for the first time since March. In portions of Florida and Oregon, as well as other states, portable morgues have been ordered to handle the current or anticipated demand.

The rise in hospitalizations is concentrated in the Southern states. Florida leads in this dismal category, with an average of 16,467 COVID-19 cases so serious they require hospitalization, with Texas following with 14,352. The 11 states across the South, from Oklahoma to North Carolina and south to the Gulf Coast, account for 57,311 hospitalizations, more than half the US total.

But no region is spared. California ranks third with a daily average of 8,700 hospitalizations, and New York, Ohio and Illinois are in the top 15 states. Infections have risen sharply all across the country, although the more heavily vaccinated areas have seen a somewhat lesser increase in the number of hospitalizations.

Contrary to the official claims, from Biden on down, that children rarely become seriously ill from COVID-19, the total number of children currently hospitalized for coronavirus reached 1,500 Friday, according to federal figures, with the largest number in Texas, 317, followed by Florida with 215. Dozens have died.

According to figures reported by the *New York Times* Monday, one in five intensive care units in the United States has at least 95 percent of beds occupied. States like Alabama and Mississippi, with decrepit health care

infrastructures in the best of times, have virtually no beds available. Parts of Texas and Florida are approaching those conditions.

The Department of Health and Human Services has issued a disaster declaration for Louisiana and Mississippi because of the combined impact of the pandemic and Hurricane Ida.

The University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville asked last week for assistance from the National Guard to handle the crush of COVID-19 patients. Hospitals in many Southern states are running out of oxygen, which is indispensable to treating coronavirus. The cutoff of oxygen supplies would be an immediate death sentence to COVID-19 patients on ventilators.

More broadly, sometime this week the United States will become the first country in the world to have had 40 million cases of coronavirus. The US infection rate, nearly one in every eight people, is the highest for any major country. This comes despite the US having administered 370 million vaccine shots and fully vaccinated 174 million people, 52 percent of the population.

The soaring rate of infections and hospitalizations, together with deaths, mean that August 2021 has been a worse month for the pandemic in America than August 2020. This is a remarkable fact given that a year ago, vaccines had not yet been developed.

The emergence of the far more contagious Delta variant of coronavirus is a primary cause of the current upsurge in the pandemic. This variant, which first emerged in India, is a byproduct of the failure of capitalist governments all over the world to impose the necessary lockdowns and shutdowns required to save lives, halt the spread of the virus in its earliest stages, and thus deny it the time and the number of human

hosts required for dangerous mutations to develop.

Another major difference between 2020 and 2021 is the reopening of most schools for in-person classes, and, in many states, the abandonment of masking either in schools or any other indoor setting. Social distancing has likewise been abandoned, in outdoor settings everywhere and in indoor settings in most areas.

Both factors, the emergence of Delta and the relaxation of public health measures, are the outcome of the deliberate refusal of the capitalist ruling elites all over the world to make saving lives and stopping the pandemic the number one priority. Instead, they have subordinated public health and human life to the preservation of “the economy,” by which they mean the preservation of capitalist profit-making and the greater enrichment of the financial aristocracy.

The US ruling elite is carrying out an increasingly deliberate policy of making use of the pandemic as an instrument of social policy, to cull sections of the population who no longer contribute to corporate profit, because they are retired, sick or disabled. Putting an end to the pandemic is only possible through a redoubled struggle by the working class, on an international basis, against the profit system, on the basis of a socialist program.



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