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Teen Night Outbreak and Covid-19 Community Update

A Covid-19 Outbreak first reported on August 3rd Associated with Beach Haven Teen Nights has accounted for at least Twenty-nine (29) laboratory confirmed cases to date, reports continue to come in. There have also been numerous cases not counted in this statistic due to out of state or reporting limits. Individuals have reported a range of mild to more significant covid symptoms. To date no reported hospitalizations or deaths have occurred. Any subsequent transmission stemming from these cases and outcomes are not included in this report. Cases attended teens nights as recent as July 25th and 27th. However, there are cases going back to July 11th suggesting nightclub's may have been a reoccurring source of transmission. Cases are not isolated to just a few circles of friends but people that have no other connection but attending teen nights. In fact, several cases involve some teenagers from the same household, some attended, some did not and those who attended have turned out to be the Covid-19 positive individuals within the incubation period following attendance.

The Pathogen:

Covid-19 is a highly infectious virus (very tiny germ) and contagious disease (spread person to person), predominantly spread from droplets from our respiratory system.

The virus can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe. These particles range from larger respiratory droplets to smaller aerosols. Significant evidence and case studies show that the virus spreads mainly between people who are in close contact with each other, typically within 3 feet. A person can be infected when aerosols or droplets containing the virus are inhaled or come directly into contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth.

The virus can also spread in poorly ventilated and/or crowded indoor settings, where people tend to spend a longer time. Aerosols remain suspended in the air or travel farther. People may also become infected by touching surfaces that have been contaminated by the virus when touching their eyes, nose or mouth without cleaning their hands.

Laboratory data suggests that infected people appear to be most infectious just before they develop symptoms (namely 2 days before they develop symptoms) and early in their illness. This is likely one of several major characteristics that can lead to significant transmission. When individuals are infected, they may not yet feel ill, socialize and may be most communicable at that time.

Overall Current Local Situation:

For the completed month of July LBIHD is reporting 31 cases of Covid-19 Infection and 19 new infections in the first week in August (not including teen outbreak 8/9 update 29 positives). Unfortunately, increasing Covid-19 activity is not unique to LBI but coincides with what is being reported regionally and nationally. When most public health measures had been lifted for Memorial Day Weekend, the vaccine was left as the primary barrier protecting individuals and their communities from this virus. The level of immunization and limited public health requirements left in place are indicating to not be enough, to keep this pandemic at bay.

The immunization rate among all eligible age ranges and particularly teens and young adults needs to see a robust improvement if we have a chance to head off subsequent activity from this spike. In the short term, public health measures such as masking indoors and avoiding crowds are advised for everyone.

The latest New Jersey surveillance data shows the Delta Variant is the predominant strain circulating and has been shown to be much more contagious. Covid-19 genetic sequencing through the state's surveillance activities is indicating in the last 4 weeks that 80 plus percent to be the Delta Variant. The Delta Variant in the latest CDC information is more contagious pointing towards the amount of virus this variant produces in life cycle of illness. Adolescent and young adults currently have low immunization rates, for those 12-15 yrs of age is 27% and for those 16-24 yrs. of age is 41%.

Press Release Regarding Ongoing Teen Outbreak:

In a situation such as this, a press release is the most effective way to communicate to the public, the risks and it would be near impossible to conduct contact tracing and notify those potentially exposed in any efficient way. Associated cases are now throughout the state and region. This is to prevent further spread of disease in a potential mass exposure, individuals can quarantine and get tested as appropriate. Unlike, case activity, in say a more closed facility, employment setting, we can notify that facility, identify contacts, reach out to individuals as they can collate contact information. Also, the scale of this potential issue is significant.

Conclusion:

This issue of teen nightclub's is likely one of several factors to emerge that is contributing to a steep increase in Covid-19 infections. Any event or location that brings together a group that has low vaccination rates not nearly protective enough, in an indoor environment that can be crowded with no social distance, masks, no recent negative tests while a more contagious Delta variant is circulating presents significant risk of transmission. Current CDC and NJDOH guidelines prescribe many of the way to reduce this risk such as avoid these environments, get immunized, social distance, wear a mask, stay home when you are unwell and get tested.

"According to Comments from Dr. Wilson an Epidemiologist with Yale Medicine In a completely unmitigated environment—where no one is vaccinated or wearing masks—it's estimated that the average person infected with the original coronavirus strain will infect 2.5 other people," Dr. Wilson says. "In the same environment, Delta would spread from one person to maybe 3.5 or 4 other people."

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Krupinski, Health Officer
Long Beach Island Health Department