



# Barry-Eaton District Health Department

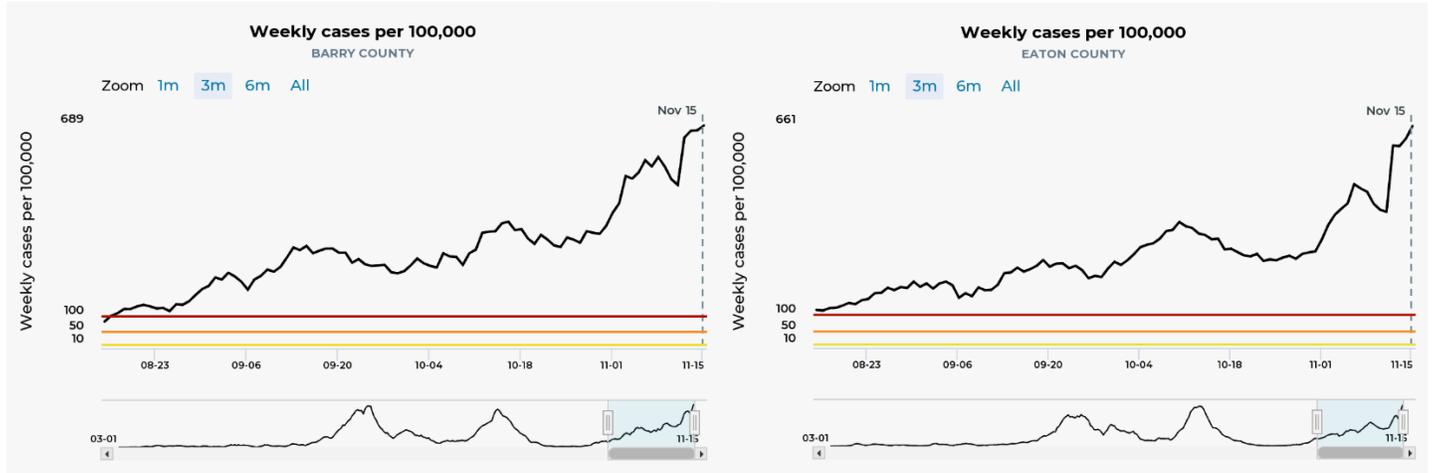
## State of Affairs: COVID-19 Pandemic in Barry and Eaton Counties

November 17, 2021

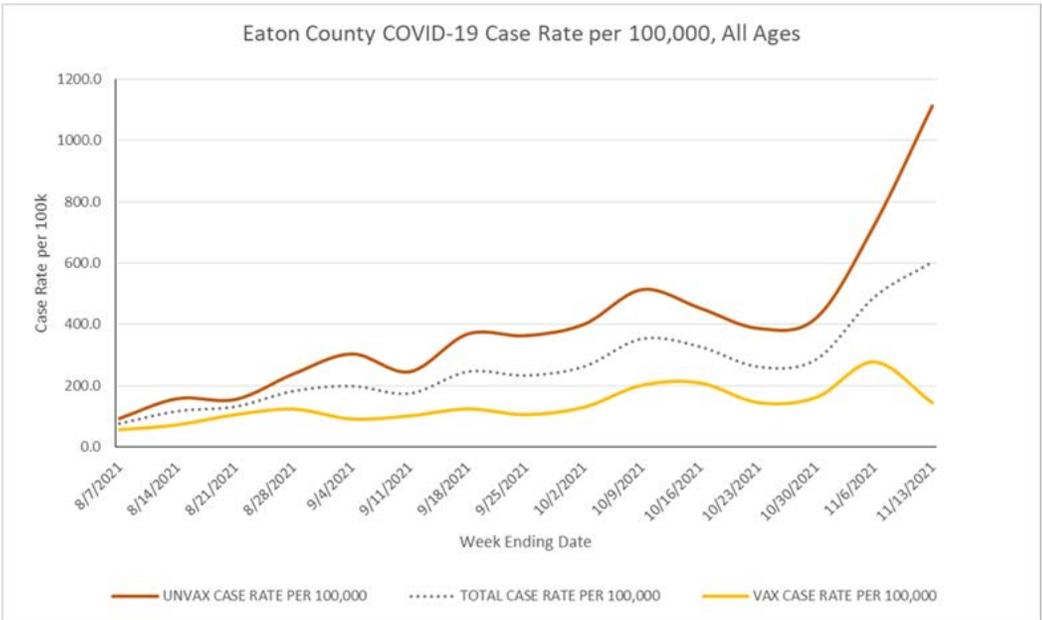
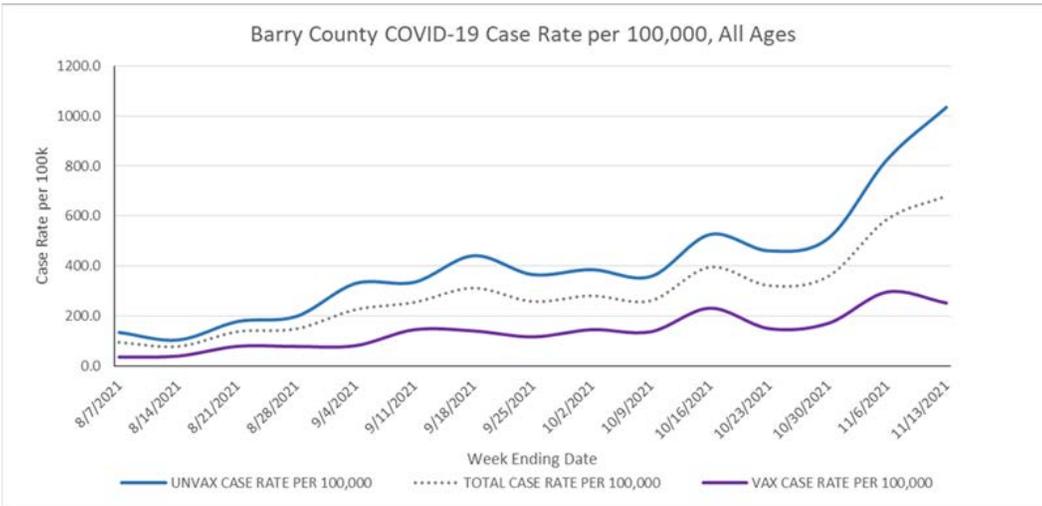
### COVID-19 Spread

#### Case Identification

COVID-19 is dramatically increasing in our area right now. Michigan has the highest rate of COVID-19 cases in the United States; at 509 weekly new cases per 100,000. Barry and Eaton counties are even higher, at 689 cases in the past 7 days per 100,000 (Barry) and 661 cases in the past 7 days per 100,000 (Eaton). **These are the highest rates at any time in the pandemic.** This is a total of 424 new cases per week in Barry County, and 729 new cases per week in Eaton County.



With case rates this high, our public health and healthcare systems struggle to provide case investigation, contact tracing, and healthcare services such as routine procedures and hospital inpatient capacity. The majority of cases are in the unvaccinated; it is incredibly important for people who are not yet vaccinated to get their first dose as soon as possible. While people who are vaccinated can contract COVID-19, particularly the Delta variant, they are MUCH less likely to contract COVID-19 if exposed. They are also less likely to spread it to others, helping to control the spread of the virus. (see sources cited in "How vaccines reduce transmission" here: <https://yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com/p/how-vaccines-reduce-transmission>)

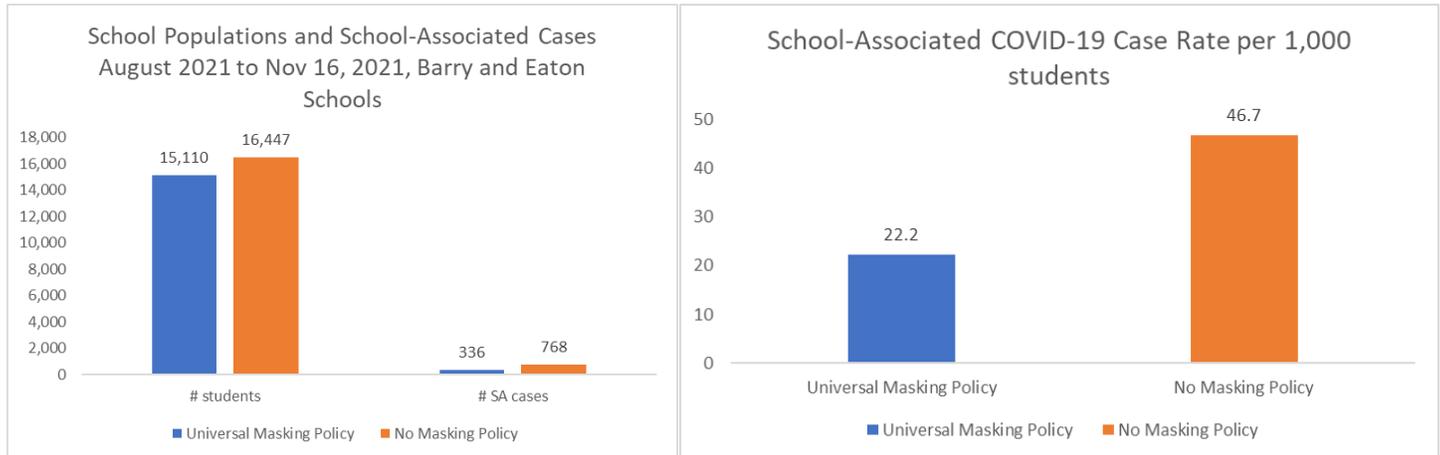


Case Investigation Capacity

BEDHD is only able to investigate about 20% of the cases that are reported to us right now. The rest are sent to MDHHS and an automated text-based case investigation program. BEDHD does not have sufficient time to respond to issues from the MDHHS case investigators, or the automated service, so contact tracing is reduced. We prioritize those in congregate care settings (nursing homes) as well as children under 18. We are getting so many reports of cases in schools that we struggle to respond to all of them in a timely way, delaying response to schools and families. We also have delays in processing reports of hospitalizations and deaths, leading to under-reporting of recent hospitalizations and deaths.

## Schools

The situation in schools is concerning for a number of reasons. In recent days, several districts have needed to close or move to distance learning due to staff and student absences. These are in districts who do not have universal masking policies. Schools where universal masking is required (Grand Ledge, Eaton Rapids, Holt, and Waverly) are experiencing fewer outbreaks and **half the rate of school-associated cases**. BEDHD continues to recommend universal masking as an important mitigation strategy to keep students at in-person learning. Adopting a universal masking policy (if you don't already have one) is most effective when you are on the upswing of a surge, which is what we are seeing currently.



Schools that are also adopting a test-to-stay strategy (where those who would be ordinarily quarantined due to a school-based exposure are able to test every morning before school) are also seeing an improvement in cases and outbreaks. This keeps more children in-person attending school and reduces the risk of an outbreak.

Are people able to get tested?

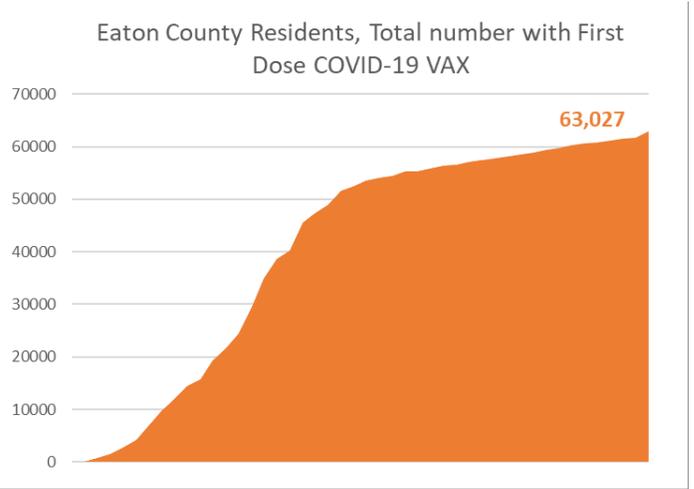
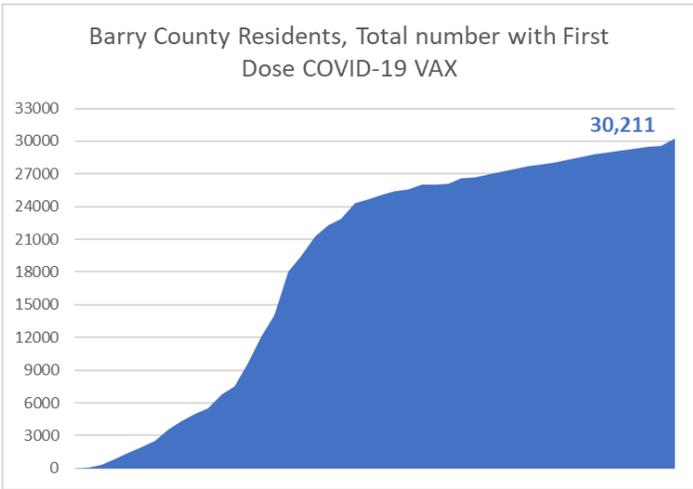
Testing access has been a challenge for many in Barry and Eaton counties. Increased demand has meant that same-day access is challenging and supplies have been constrained.

BEDHD is partnering with the Michigan National Guard and HONU to bring more rapid testing access to both Barry and Eaton counties. These sites reduce barriers that many have experienced to testing, including transportation, availability, insurance, and cost. The Barry site began on October 18, and through Nov 15<sup>th</sup> have completed 1,922 rapid antigen tests, 421 of which were positive. The Eaton site began on Tuesday Nov 16<sup>th</sup>, and offers both PCR and rapid antigen tests. We anticipate a transition from the Barry site from MING to HONU in coming weeks as well.

## Vaccination

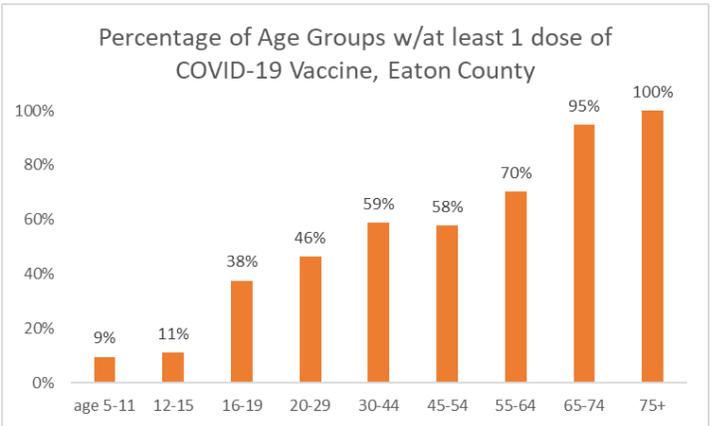
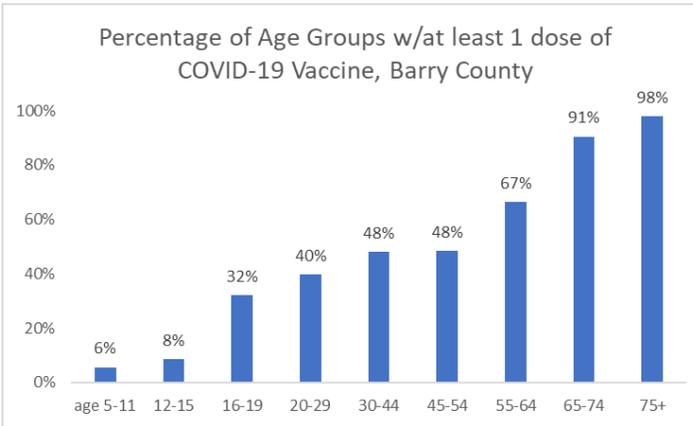
### Coverage

Vaccination rates remain too low at this point to stop case surges and outbreaks. There are still too many people who are susceptible. Immunity from prior infection is more unpredictable and wanes faster than immunity from vaccination. While boosters will help to some degree, it's important for the unvaccinated to get their first shot. BEDHD began vaccinating children ages 5 to 11 on November 8<sup>th</sup>.



### By Age Group

Vaccination patterns for COVID-19 is highly correlated with age – the older the population, the greater the rates of vaccination. We expect the rates for ages 5-11 to continue to increase. It will be critical to improve the rates of vaccinations in younger working-age adults, particularly those aged 20-54, as well to address workplace, social, and household spread.

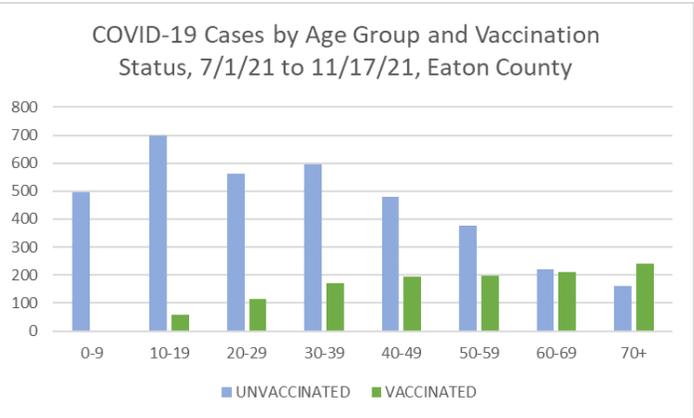
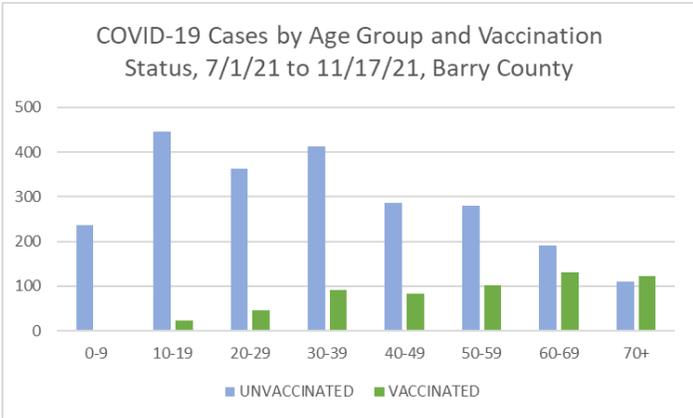
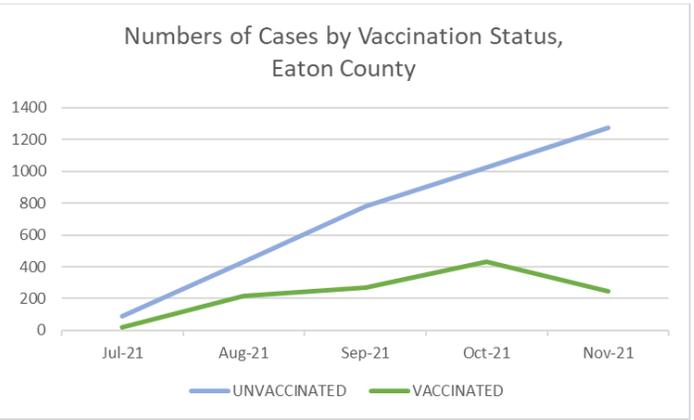
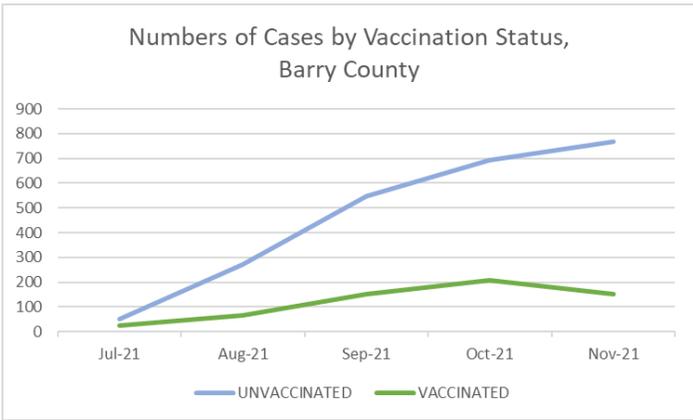


### Vaccine Availability

BEDHD continues to offer larger clinics at the Barry Expo Center and the Lansing Mall. As demand wanes we will transition back to offering more targeted outreach clinics, increasing homebound and congregate care vaccinations, and offering walk-in's at the health department buildings. Adult vaccine availability remains high across the district as many pharmacies, doctor's offices, and healthcare systems are providing doses. Pediatric vaccine access for ages 5-11 was initially limited, particularly in Barry County, but we are seeing an increase in providers and pharmacies who are signing up to offer the vaccine. BEDHD is partnering with BISD and ERESA to offer sensory-friendly clinics for the 5-11 year old population.

### Effectiveness

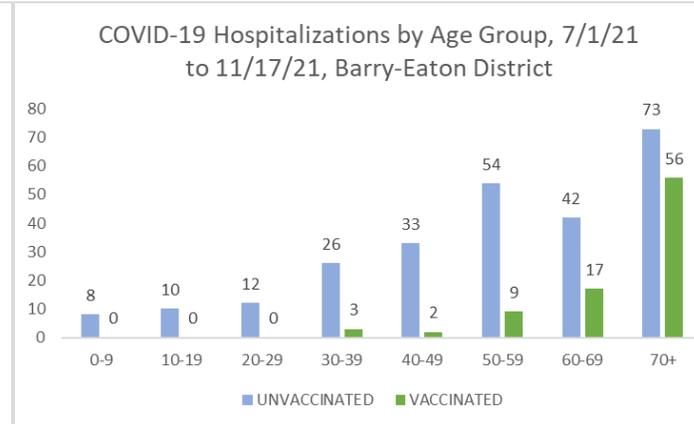
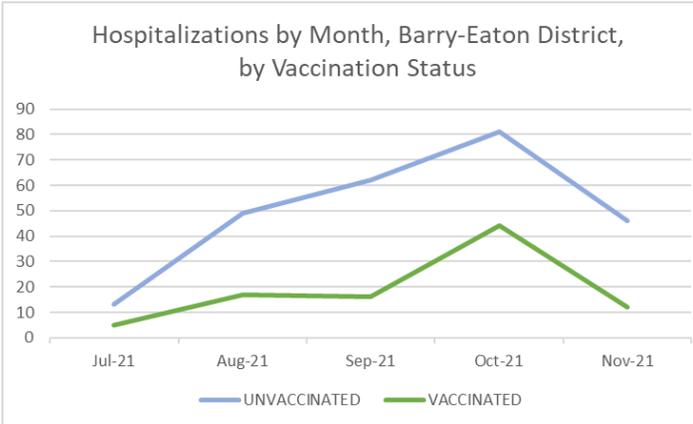
Vaccination is very effective at reducing the chances of getting COVID-19. Increases in cases this fall have been driven by the unvaccinated. When you examine cases by age group and vaccination status, the number of unvaccinated cases as well as total number of cases are higher in younger age groups. Vaccinated cases only outpaces unvaccinated cases at age 70, when immunity is reduced for many older adults – reducing their ability to benefit as much from the vaccine. This is why vaccination of younger people is so critical to protecting older adults. Given how many older adults are vaccinated, the rates are much lower for vaccinated to contract COVID-19, even for this high-risk group.



**Hospitalizations**

Just as the national studies predicted, vaccination has a large impact on hospitalizations in Barry and Eaton counties. People who are vaccinated have fewer hospitalizations, and their hospitalizations tend to be much less severe. The impact on age and hospitalizations is illustrated in the age group chart – given that most adults over 60 are vaccinated, the numbers demonstrate how protective vaccinations are. (While a rate chart would be a more effective way to demonstrate that, it was not available for this publication)

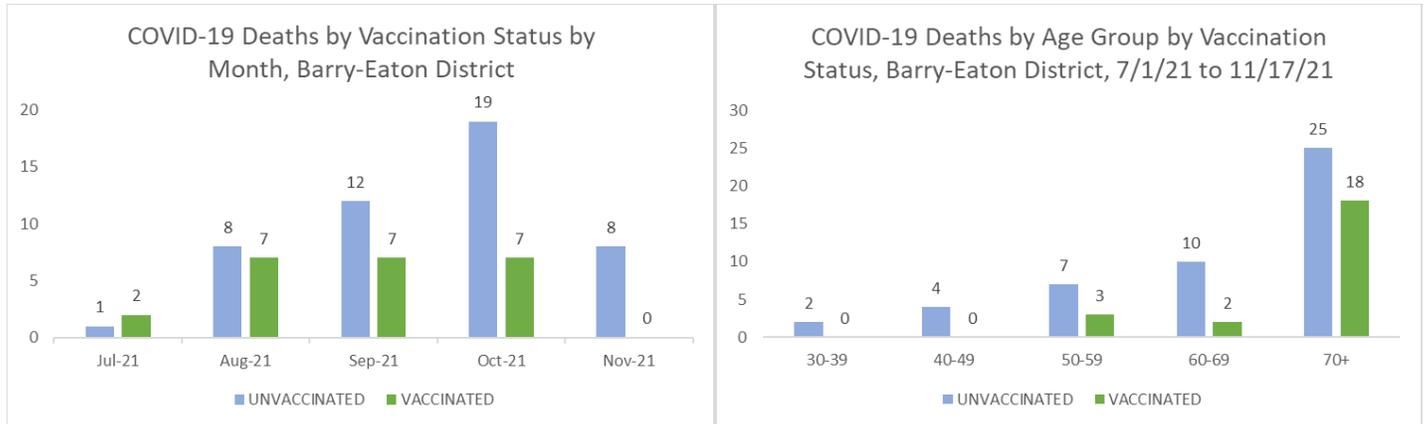
The median age for COVID-19 hospitalizations is 55 for unvaccinated in Eaton County, and 74 for vaccinated. In Barry County, the median age for hospitalization is 64 for unvaccinated, and 74 for vaccinated.



## Deaths

Similarly, vaccinations are effective at preventing deaths from COVID-19 in Barry and Eaton Counties. We have seen an increase in COVID-19 deaths for unvaccinated people this fall. Vaccinated deaths are primarily in those over the age of 70.

The median age of deaths due to COVID-19 for unvaccinated is 73, for vaccinated is 84, in Eaton County. In Barry County, the median age of deaths due to COVID-19 is 74 for unvaccinated, and 74 for vaccinated.



## Understanding Breakthrough Cases

Breakthrough cases are those persons who contract COVID-19 despite being fully vaccinated for the disease. These are more likely in those who are older, those with compromised immune systems, and those who are more exposed to COVID-19 (such as through work). It's important to understand that the chances that an unvaccinated person and a vaccinated person catching COVID-19 from an exposure are not the same. Vaccinated people are much less likely to contract the disease, and are less infectious if they do contract it. The majority of vaccinated people won't spread the virus if they are exposed. Among breakthrough cases, vaccines ensure less infectious viral particles for a shorter period of time. Fully vaccinated people provide little to no threat to community transmission. (see sources cited in "How vaccines reduce transmission" here: <https://yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com/p/how-vaccines-reduce-transmission>)

## Our Recommendations

Given the current situation, what are BEDHD's recommendations to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and reduce sickness, hospitalizations, and deaths?

1. Most importantly, get vaccinated. Get your children vaccinated, and talk with your loved ones about getting vaccinated.
2. Stay home if you are sick. Keep your children home if they are ill, whether you know it's COVID-19 or not. Follow isolation and quarantine recommendations.
3. Wear a mask when indoors, around others that you don't live with. Given the current level of spread in Barry and Eaton counties, this is the CDC recommendation as well. If your child's school does not have a universal masking policy, encourage your child to wear a mask and provide them with spare, clean masks.
4. Choose your activities wisely. Choose gatherings where most or all people will be vaccinated or test negative before the event.
5. Workplaces should re-evaluate their policies and practices to reduce transmission between co-workers or workers and the public. Screening, testing, ventilation, and vaccinations are all effective mitigation strategies that should be layered. Meetings should be held virtually whenever possible, especially if people are not required to wear masks.

Sources:

COVID-19 Case Investigation Records in the Michigan Disease Surveillance System

COVID-19 Vaccination Records in the Michigan Care Improvement Registry

[www.barryeatonhealth.org/coronavirus](http://www.barryeatonhealth.org/coronavirus)

[www.mistartmap.info](http://www.mistartmap.info)

Michigan's COVID-19 Vaccination Dashboard: [https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98178\\_103214\\_103272-547150--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98178_103214_103272-547150--,00.html)

<https://yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com/p/how-vaccines-reduce-transmission>