

BROADCAST SCRIPT-Delta variant plus Fourth of July gatherings equals concern among health leaders

A weekly national poll finds people know about the COVID-19 delta variant and concerns that it is more transmissible, but they don't plan to change their behavior because of it. The [latest Axios-Ipsos poll](#), showed people who are vaccinated are confident they're protected. A majority of those polled say attending Fourth of July celebrations poses a small risk or no risk at all (59%); the same is true for taking a vacation (64%). However, health leaders say that's not necessarily true with the delta variant circulating rapidly among those who are not vaccinated.

The delta variant now accounts for [about 1 in every 5 new coronavirus infections](#) in the U.S., according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). With more than half of the population still not fully vaccinated, health experts and officials worry that regions with low amounts of virus protection could see surges. Dr. Robert Ayers, an Occupational Health physician for OSF HealthCare, says the variant now makes up nearly 20% of all cases in the U.S., and data experts predict that number is going to keep doubling if more people aren't vaccinated.

Some researchers say the delta variant is as much as 60% more transmissible than the alpha variant discovered in the U.K. The country's top infectious disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci warns the delta variant can cause more serious disease and hospitalizations. Dr. Ayers is concerned about what he's seeing.

SOT-Dr. Robert Ayers, an Occupational Health physician for OSF HealthCare

“The cases that we're seeing, they're younger, they're sicker just because the virus seems to be a little more contagious. Whether I'm able to shed more virus out of my nose, and with respiratory droplets, it's a higher concentration of virus so I'm able to spread more with this variant than with some of the other, earlier variants.” (:20)

Dr. Ayers says the good news is the vaccines are proving effective against the delta variant. However, those who are only partially vaccinated have significantly less protection, according to Dr. Ayers. The completely unvaccinated are taking an unnecessary risk.

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“We know that the vaccines seem to be controlling this virus variant. Even though it's concerning, it's still more of a concern for the unvaccinated population.” (:14)

With vaccines so widely available, almost every COVID-19 death is preventable, but Dr. Ayers says convincing otherwise healthy, younger people they could die from an infection is a challenge, even though it happens every day.

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“Younger people tend not to get vaccinated anyway for other diseases, (including) flu. So, it is a concern that yes, you are vulnerable and yes, this variant seems to be affecting your age group and it's time now to make a decision about what you're doing to do going forward,” he advises. (:23)

Dr. Fauci has taken to Youtube and even Tik Tok to convince those 12 and older that if they haven't been vaccinated yet, now is the time to get their COVID-19 shot.