

Doses

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With Oregon one of 12 states currently seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases, the state plans to withdraw from the vaccine bank quickly.

“Oregon will ask for the maximum allowed, which will help us to get shots in arms faster,” Gov. Kate Brown said Tuesday.

On April 27, Oregon’s infection rate had grown by 53% over the previous two weeks, the highest mark in the nation.

COVID-19 infections are still rising in Oregon, but more slowly. Cases have risen only 12% over the past two weeks. Oregon’s 33% increase in hospitalizations over the same time is the third highest in the nation, behind only Alaska and Kansas.

Nationwide, the infection rate is down 26% in the past two weeks.

The strongest piece of positive news came at the end of April, when Oregon recorded its fewest COVID-19 deaths in a month since the beginning of the crisis in March 2020. Oregon currently has the fifth lowest death rate per 100,000 people in the United States. Alaska, Vermont, Hawaii and Idaho have lower rates.

Biden’s vaccination goal would require that 55 million people get their first shot by the end of the first week of June, just four weeks from now. The Oregon Health Author-



Ryan Brennecke/Bulletin file

Kerry Gillette, a physician assistant with Mosaic Medical, fills syringes with the Moderna vaccine during a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at Bethlehem Inn in Bend.

ity reported Thursday that just under 37% of state residents age 16 and older were fully vaccinated. Another 15% have had one shot and have scheduled their second dose.

The one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine could speed up the effort, but manufacturing issues and a review of safety concerns have slowed distribution to a trickle.

Just as there are states that eagerly desire the vaccine while others shun it, counties in Oregon show the same pattern.

Vaccination rates of residents 16 and older have varied

widely across the 36 counties, from 64% in Benton and Hood River counties to less than 32% in Lake, Umatilla and Malheur counties.

That’s led to shifting more vaccine to areas where it is in demand, including Portland.

Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock told the East Oregonian newspaper that some of the reasons for the low turnout to get shots were political.

Though ex-President Donald Trump was vaccinated, some see vaccination refusal as an extension of the opposition

to Brown’s orders closing businesses that angered many in the area.

“The polling seems to show older Republican men seem to be the group who least likely want to get the vaccination,” Murdock said. “But I’m an absolute contrast to that. I’m old, I’m a Republican and I couldn’t wait to get mine fast enough.”

Oregon has the highest rate of “vaccine hesitancy” on the West Coast, with 15% of residents saying they are unsure or don’t want to get the shots, according to a report this week from the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention.

In contrast, California and Washington are reporting about 11% of the population is unsure or doesn’t want to be inoculated. California officials said the highest rates of negative response were in the northern tier of rural counties nearest the Oregon border.

Oregon has also dealt with what OHA Director Pat Allen has called “vaccine belligerency,” an active opposition to not only being inoculated, but at times protesting those who choose to get the vaccine. Incidents have included the heckling by anti-vaccination hardliners of Bend high school students at a school-sponsored clinic.

Other steps are being taken to get more “impulse vaccinations” by offering shots without appointments. Many people across the country and in Oregon have expressed frustration with multiple, sometimes clunky websites required to make appointments. Now, it’s possible to just show up and roll up a sleeve.

“The Oregon Convention Center is offering walk-in vaccinations starting Friday,” said Charles Boyle, a Brown spokesman.

Both federal and state health officials have said that they will also increasingly find ways to get vaccine to people instead of people to the vaccine. This will include mobile clinics, pop-up sites and vaccination days at major employers.

Over the entire pandemic that began in China on Dec. 31, 2019, Oregon has had the third lowest per-capita number of cases in the nation, at 4,432 per 100,000. Though the rise in infections has been sharp, Oregon’s longstanding place near the bottom of cases and deaths means that its per-capita number of cases pushed it no higher than 12th place.

Oregon was among about a half dozen states with the lowest infection and death rates over the course of the pandemic.

Just over 2,500 deaths were reported by Oregon out of the more than 575,000 deaths in the United States.

Biden said Tuesday that he hoped the more people see the vaccine curbing COVID-19, the more he hopes they will change their minds and be inoculated, if not for themselves, then for family and friends.

“I think at the end of the day, most people will be convinced by the fact that their failure to get the vaccine may cause other people to get sick and possibly die,” Biden said.

There is currently no vaccine approved for children. Pfizer announced it will ask for federal approval for emergency use of its vaccine on children as young as 2.

The company told Wall Street analysts during an earnings call that the approval could come as early as next week.

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Clinics

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This frightened some students who were worried the protesters would eventually step onto campus, she said.

Anti-vaccine protesters were not as vocal outside a clinic at Mountain View High School on Tuesday, but at least one protester — a self-described “constitutionalist” — was openly displaying a weapon, Repman said. “From a school standpoint, it raises the hair on the back of our

necks,” she said.

In response Thursday at Summit High School, which hosted the third vaccine clinic, students arrived early to support classmates getting vaccinated and were joined by interim Bend-La Pine Schools Superintendent Lora Nordquist, Summit Principal Michael McDonald, a uniformed Bend Police school resource officer and local politicians.

But the protesters didn’t show. Nor did they show up at a similar clinic Thursday at La Pine High School.

“I’m a little surprised we didn’t have more (protesters), but I’m happy to see kids out here wanting to support each other,” McDonald said. Summit junior, Felix Cowan, 17, used warlike imagery to describe what dealing with anti-vaccine protesters was like.

“You can feel like you’re walking through the trenches, with 30 adults, half of them are armed,” he said. “It will be nice to have familiar faces, peers, in the crowd.” Having school staff wait in the parking lot for students on vaccine

clinic days was a pre-emptive decision made for all schools in this situation, Repman said.

No one had a surefire reason why protesters didn’t materialize. Summit junior Matthew Schrader-Patton, 17, believes online backlash to the protesters at Mountain View may have scared them off.

“With the reaction this event has garnered, I think it’s a little typical for the protesters to be a little deterred from showing up,” he said.

Protesters or not, Bend high schoolers are getting vaccinated.

About 314 students received a vaccine dose at the Bend High and Mountain View clinics, Repman said — that’s about 21% of eligible Bend High students and about 16% of eligible Mountain View students.

At Summit, about 150 students pre-registered for the vaccine, and nearly 200 were vaccinated Thursday Repman said. Another 27 students got vaccines at La Pine High

School Thursday.

In the state of Oregon, teens age 15 and older can agree to medical services — including immunization — without parental consent, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

These clinics come as hundreds of Bend-La Pine students have had to quarantine recently due to close contact with positive cases, resulting in the district shrinking in-person school hours to better support quarantining students.

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