http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/covid-19-uw-madison-s5.jpg



Arrival of fall, opening of schools and campuses, people heading to bars and gatherings spark unprecedented, near-exponential growth of the COVID-19 pandemic. "We need to continue wearing masks and practicing physical distancing," says Governor.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers declared a new public health emergency in Wisconsin Tuesday due to recent surge in cases among young people and issued a new face coverings order effective immediately. Executive Order #90 is available here . Emergency Order #1 is available here
. Both orders are effective immediately and will expire after sixty days or with a subsequent superseding order. The governor previously declared a public health emergency under Executive Order #82, which remains in effect.



“We continue to learn more about this virus, but what we do know is that we are facing a new and dangerous phase of the COVID-19 pandemic here in Wisconsin,” said Gov. Evers. “We are

seeing an alarming increase in cases across our state, especially on campus. We need folks to start taking this seriously, and young people especially—please stay home as much as you are able, skip heading to the bars, and wear a mask whenever you go out. We need your help to stop the spread of this virus, and we all have to do this together."

With the start of the school year, Wisconsin is seeing a surge in cases, especially among young people. In fact, 18 to 24-year-olds have a case rate five times higher than any other age group. This significant increase has only occurred within the past month and appears to be driven by in-person social gatherings. Last week, eight Wisconsin cities were listed among the top twenty cities in the United States where COVID-19 cases were rising fastest, and six of those eight cities have University of Wisconsin System campuses.

"The current surge among young people is concerning, but it is important to remember that this increase in cases is not confined to college campuses," said Department of Health Services Secretary-designee Andrea Palm. "Students come to these campuses from across the state, and we worry about the effect their return from an area with a high infection rate could have on their home communities. That is why it is imperative we take action to curb transmission now – to protect residents of Wisconsin in every corner of the state."

Wisconsin is now experiencing unprecedented, near-exponential growth of the COVID-19 pandemic with the daily number of new cases rising from 678 on August 31st to 1,791 on September 21st, a 2.6-fold increase in three weeks, driven in part by the unprecedented number of infections among 18-24 year-olds.

"We need to remember that most respiratory viruses see their peak activity in Wisconsin between late fall and early spring," said Dr. Ryan Westergaard, Wisconsin's Chief Medical Officer and the State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases. "We need to do everything we can now to slow the spread of COVID-19 and prepare for the winter. That is why we need to continue wearing masks and practicing physical distancing. It is also why we encourage everyone to get a flu shot this year; the flu shot cannot protect you from COVID-19, but by helping protect you from the flu, it helps strengthen our COVID-10 response here in Wisconsin by preserving hospital and testing capacity."

On July 30, Gov. Evers issued Executive Order #82 to declare a public health emergency as a result of a spike in COVID-19 cases in counties throughout the state. At the same time, Gov. Evers issued a statewide face covering mandate. New cases of COVID-19 slowed down in

August as a result of the mandate, but as campuses reopened the last several weeks, there has been a new surge in cases across our state. With today's new face covering order, Wisconsin residents ages five and older are required to wear a face covering when they are indoors or in an enclosed space with anyone outside their household or living unit.

For up-to-date information about Wisconsin's COVID-19 response, visit the DHS COVID-19 webpage. We also encourage you to follow @DHSWI on Facebook and Twitter, or dhs.wi on Instagram for more information on COVID-19.