

CDC COVID-19 Community Transmission Levels

Public Health Talking Points

Why the move to CDC COVID-19 Community Levels?

The COVID-19 Community Levels (CCLs) combine metrics of COVID-19 hospital admissions and hospital capacity with case data to identify when a community is facing a low, medium, or high level of risk from COVID-19.

Prior to the establishment of the CCLs, public health utilized the Community Transmission Levels. The Transmission levels were based on percent positivity rates and case rates; this alone did not provide a specific metric related to severity of illness. The Community Levels, however, were designed using modeling from past COVID-19 case surges to better factor in the impact observed on healthcare capacity and hospitalization. This shift better aligns with primary pandemic goals of protecting healthcare infrastructure and ensuring the system does not become overwhelmed.

Note: the CDC continues to provide community transmission level data. However, this is only provided for use by healthcare systems, skilled nursing facilities and agencies, as required by CMS to support decision making and infection prevention practice guidelines – and not intended for broader public decision making and action.

What period of data do the community levels look at?

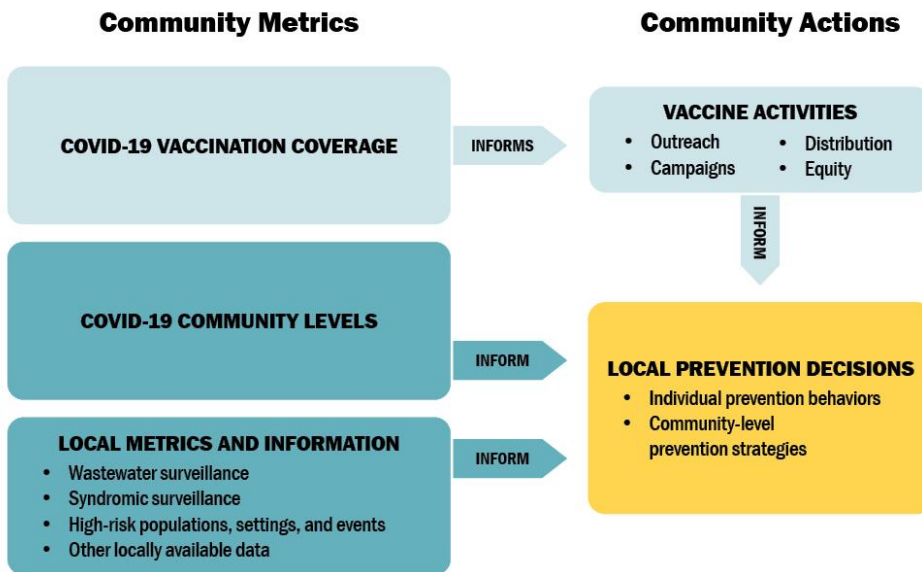
- At this time, the CDC calculates the CCLs on Wednesdays, the time windows used each week:
 - Hospital data will be from Tuesday of the previous week to Monday of the week the CCLs are published.
 - Case data will be from Wednesday of the previous week to Tuesday of the week the CCLs are published.

What factors should be considered when making decisions about prevention methods to reduce COVID-19 impact in local communities?

COVID-19 Community Levels can inform local COVID-19 response efforts but are intended to be paired and considered with other local data and context. When making decisions about prevention methods to reduce COVID-19's impact in their communities, public health officials should consider local factors and data sources, including:

- COVID-19 Community Levels and underlying indicators,
- other surveillance information (wastewater, ED surveillance, LTC facility data, etc.),
- vaccination coverage,
- capacity for detecting new cases and novel variants (e.g., testing capacity), and
- health equity & local populations at risk for severe disease.

Community members and non-healthcare organizations should follow recommendations from local public health officials and agencies as these recommendations will be based off multiple factors, as previously outlined.



Additional Resources:

- **COVID-19 Community Levels:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html>
- **Science Brief: Indicators for Monitoring COVID-19 Community Levels and Making Public Health Recommendations:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/indicators-monitoring-community-levels.html>
- **Scientific Rationale Technical Brief (slide deck):** https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/science/Scientific-Rationale-summary_COVID-19-Community-Levels_2022.02.23.pptx
- **County Check Tool:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>