

Watauga Communicable Disease Update

October 14th, 2022

Communicable Disease Updates & Important Points

Monkeypox

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus, which is closely related to the virus causing smallpox. Monkeypox symptoms are similar to those of smallpox symptoms, but milder, and monkeypox is rarely fatal. The CDC is closely tracking cases of monkeypox recently detected in the United States. North Carolina's first monkeypox case was identified on June 23, 2022. Most of the cases identified in North Carolina have been among men who have sex with men and it is important to know anyone can get monkeypox.

CDC recommends vaccination for people who have been exposed to monkeypox and people who are at higher risk of being exposed to monkeypox.

There is limited supply of the vaccine and is available for individuals who meet vaccine criteria:

- Anyone who has had close contact in the past two weeks with someone who has been diagnosed with monkeypox,
- Gay or bisexual men or transgender individuals who report any of the following in the last 90 days: 1) Having multiple sex partners or anonymous sex; 2) Being diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection; 3) Receiving medications to prevent HIV infection (PrEP)

If you meet this criteria, call us at (828) 795-1970 to discuss vaccine eligibility.

Monkeypox virus can be spread person-to-person through infected body fluids (including saliva and lesion fluid), items that have been in contact with infected fluids or lesion crusts, and respiratory droplets. The incubation period is usually 7–14 days but can range from 5–21 days. People with monkeypox are infectious from the start of symptoms (before the rash forms) until the lesions heal and new skin forms underneath scabs and the scabs have all fallen off.

Testing is widely available and encouraged if you have had close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with monkeypox, or have symptoms of monkeypox including unexplained [bumps, sores, blisters, or pimples](#) that look like monkeypox.

Monkeypox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks. Scientists are still researching if the virus can be spread when someone has no symptoms, how often it spreads through respiratory secretions and whether it can be spread through semen, vaginal fluids, urine or feces.

For up-to-date North Carolina monkeypox case counts and information visit [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services](#), and for prevention, symptoms, vaccine and treatment information visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

If you are worried about symptoms of monkeypox, or have been in contact with someone who has monkeypox, reach out to your healthcare provider or local health department. AppHealthCare is the local health department for Alleghany, Ashe and Watauga Counties, and we can be reached at (828) 795-1970.

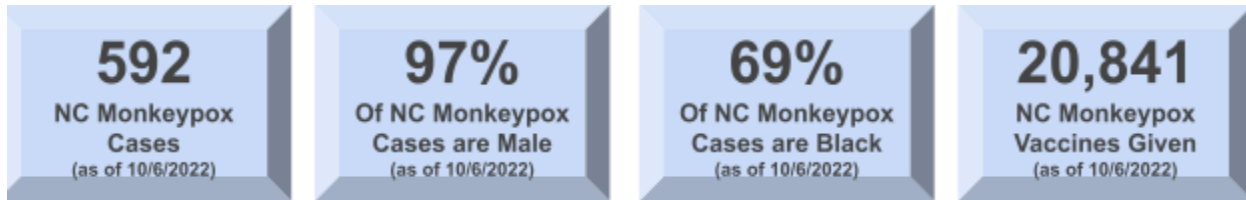


**Remember, anyone
can get or pass on
monkeypox.**



Monkeypox Data in North Carolina

(Monkeypox data accessed from [NCDHHS Monkeypox Data Dashboard](#), with monkeypox case count current as of 10/6/2022, and demographic and vaccine information current as of 10/6/2022)



(“Monkeypox Cases by Date of Symptom Onset” with data current as of October 5th, 2022, and “Monkeypox Cases by County, 2022” with data current as of October 5th, 2022, accessed from NCDHHS’s [2022 Monkeypox Surveillance Data](#))

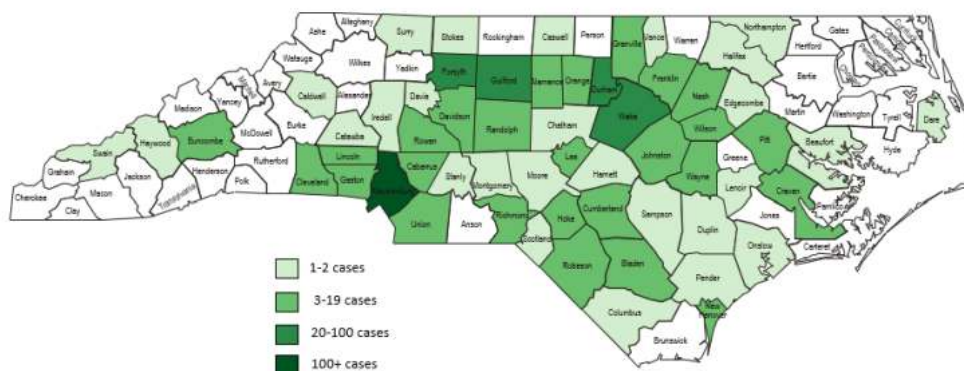
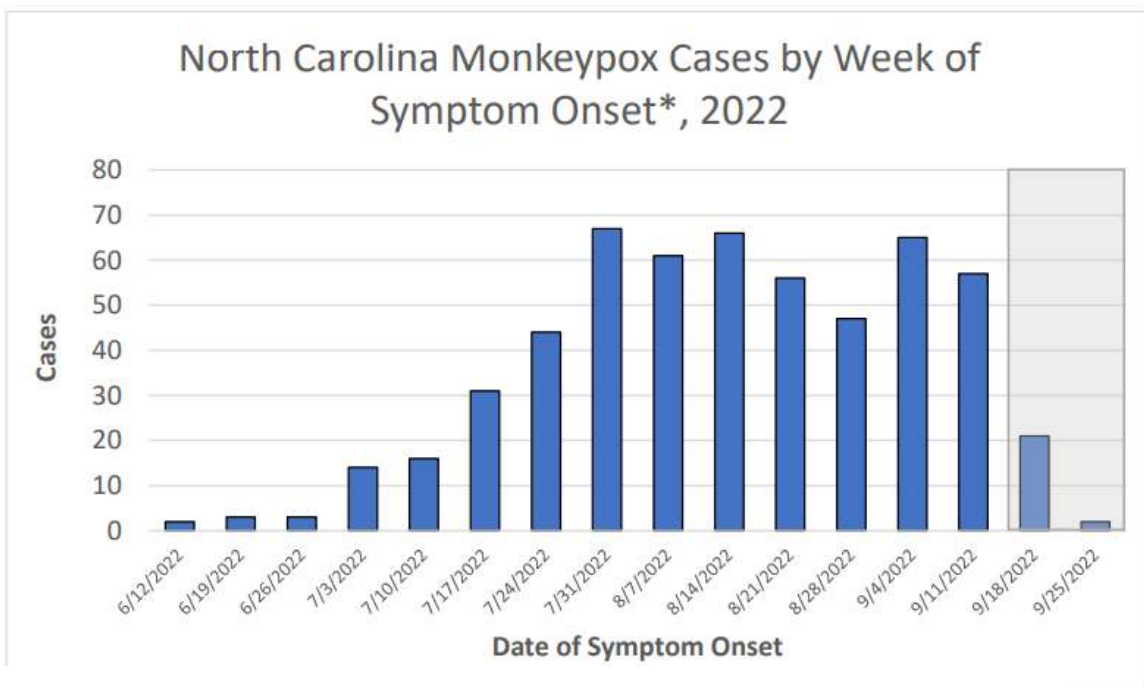


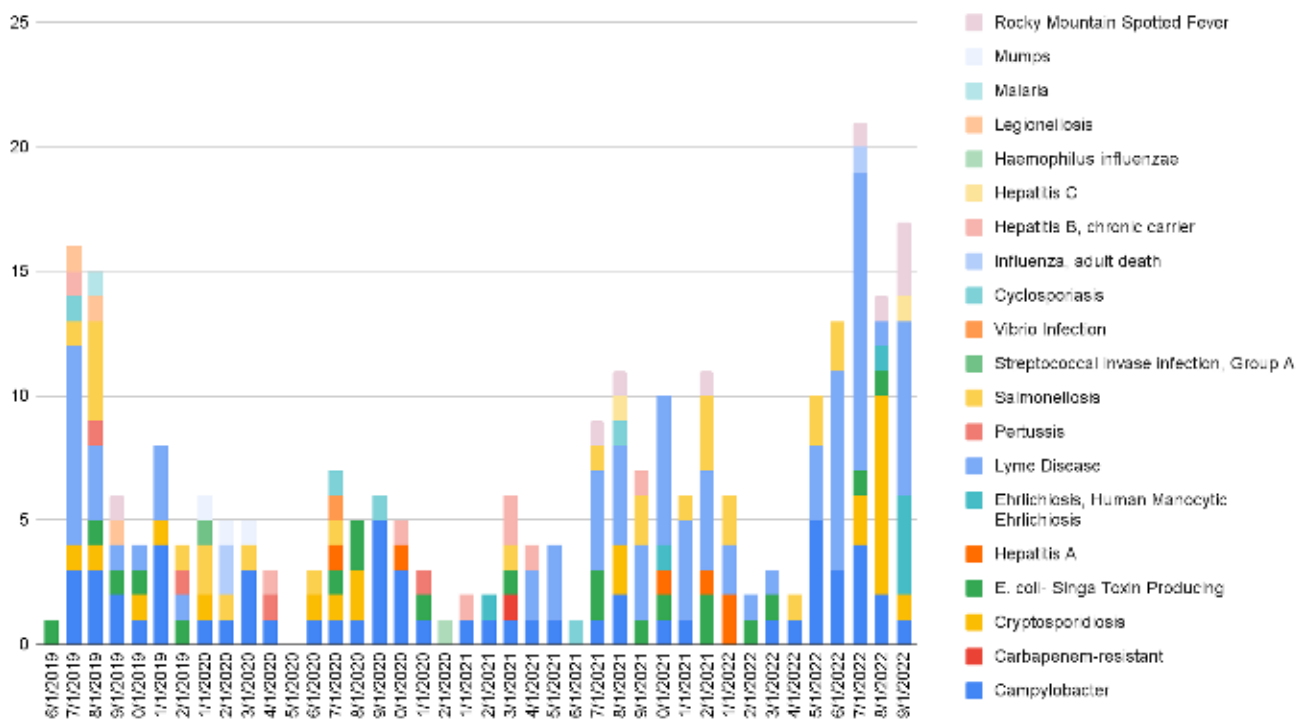
Figure 1: Monkeypox Cases by County, October 5, 2022

Communicable Disease Data (excluding COVID-19)

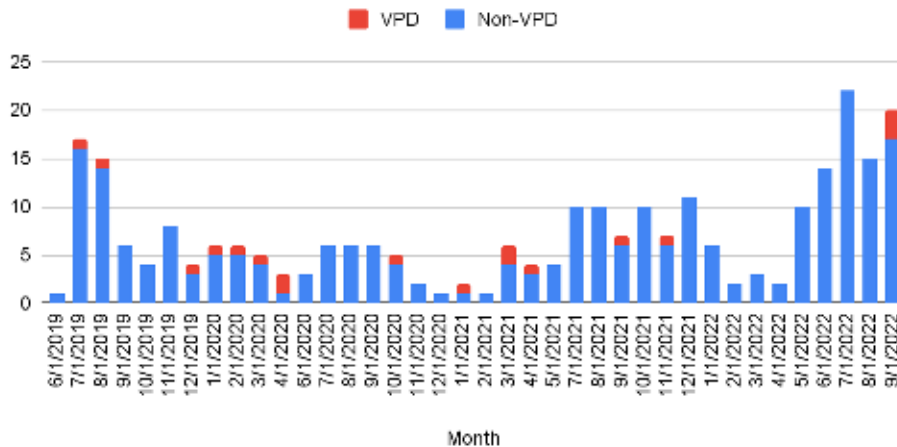
Vaccines prevent disease in the people who receive them and also in the broader community. Because of childhood vaccination programs, diseases like polio, measles, diphtheria, rubella (German measles), mumps, tetanus, and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) are no longer widespread in the United States. However, cases and outbreaks of these diseases continue to occur due to travel to and from areas with lower vaccine coverage. Many diseases however are not preventable through vaccines, including but not limited to lyme disease, rocky mountain spotted fever, and salmonella.

The figures below represent communicable disease cases in residents of Watauga County by month, excluding COVID-19, reported between June of 2019 and September of 2022.

Watauga County Communicable Disease Cases by Month



Watauga County Vaccine Preventable Disease (VPD) and Non Vaccine Preventable Disease (Non-VPD) by Month



COVID-19 Updates & Important Points

Protect Yourself & Others

Vaccinate and Boost: If you are unvaccinated, don't wait - get a vaccine today. **Vaccines continue to be our best tool at preventing severe outcomes like hospitalization and death.** Vaccines are widely available at pharmacies, healthcare offices and health departments. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have specific questions related to your medical history. For a list of local vaccine providers, visit AppHealthCare.com.

This week, the FDA, ACIP and CDC have **recommended bivalent boosters for pediatrics.**

- The Moderna COVID-19 Bivalent Vaccine is recommended for use as a single booster dose for **children and adolescents aged 6 to 17** at least two months following primary or booster vaccination.
- The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Bivalent Vaccine is recommended for use as a single booster dose in **individuals aged 5 to 11 years** at least two months following primary or booster vaccination.

The bivalent vaccine has been updated to add protection for the BA.4 and BA.5 variants (in addition to the original strain). We are expecting our shipment of new boosters soon and are hopeful to begin scheduling appointments by the end of next week. We will provide updates as we know more in the coming days.

Test: Get tested if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. Testing is available at pharmacies, healthcare offices and health departments. At-home test kits are also available free of charge at our health department/health center locations. The federal at-home test program has been suspended as of today due to lack of funding. For a list of local testing options and at-home testing information, visit AppHealthCare.com.

Mask: Masks can help protect you and others from COVID-19. Individuals may wear a mask based on personal preference. Masks remain important in higher risk settings like healthcare facilities, long term care facilities, and correctional facilities. Also, if you are at higher risk of severe illness, may be in a setting of higher risk or have concerns about your exposure risk, you may choose to add to your layered protection by wearing a high quality, well-fitted mask, in addition to being up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccinations.

Treatment Options

While vaccines offer the best protection against severe outcomes due to COVID-19, treatment options are available to decrease your risk of hospitalization and death. Early testing and treatment are key. Any treatment should be recommended by a healthcare provider and requires a positive COVID-19 test. For more information about available treatment options and to find a treatment location near you, visit the [NC DHHS website](https://www.ncdhhs.gov).

Healthcare Infection Control Standards

The CDC is asking healthcare facilities to track COVID-19 transmission levels in their community to guide masking within the facility. Refer to the latest [CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov).

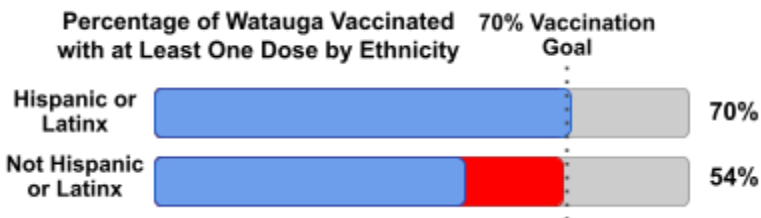
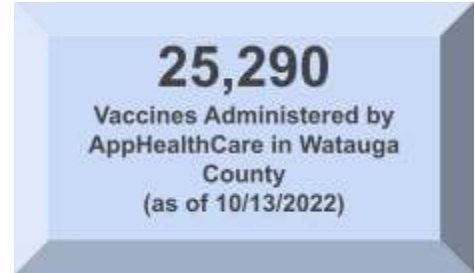
For more information, visit AppHealthCare.com or call our COVID-19 Call Center at (828) 795-1970.

COVID-19 Watauga County Vaccination Updates

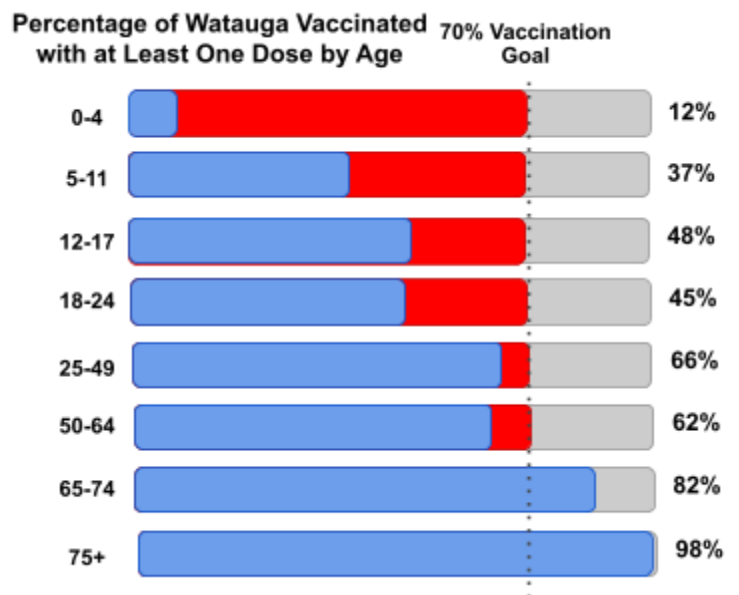
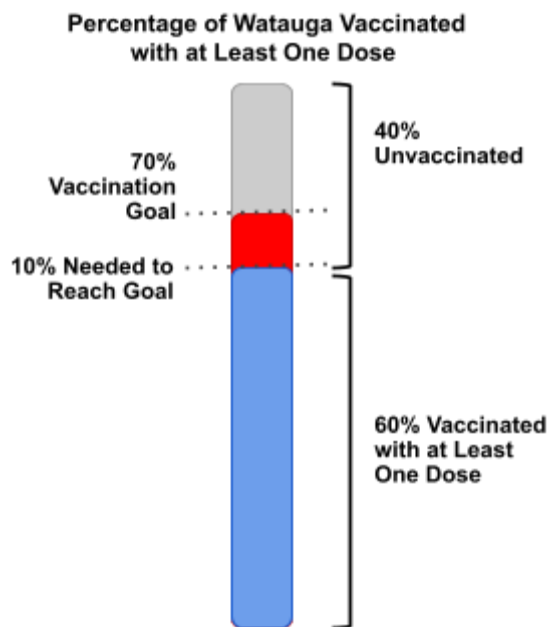
County-specific race, ethnicity and age data are from the [NCDHHS COVID-19 Vaccination Dashboard](#), - (All vaccine demographic data are current as of 10/12/2022).

Data tracking these outcomes is updated monthly and can be viewed at [the CDC Data Tracker site linked here.](#)

For more information regarding COVID-19 vaccines or a list of local providers, visit AppHealthCare.com.



Percent of Population by Race Vaccinated with at Least One Dose	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0%
Asian	0%
Black or African American	48%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%
White	54%



Watauga County COVID-19 Case Updates

Cases to Date in Watauga County: (Data is current as of 10/13/2022)

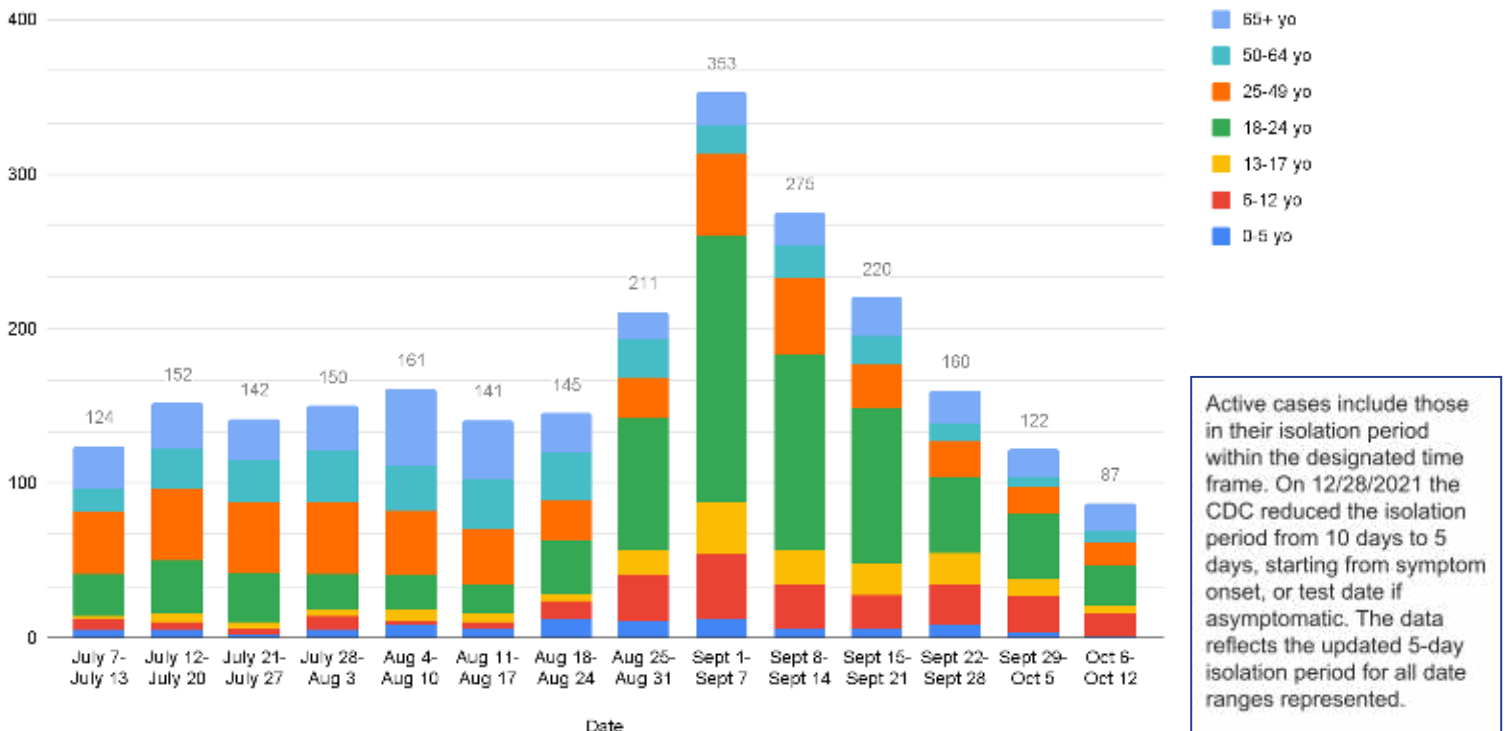
Watauga County COVID-19 Community Level: Low.

(All data and guidance per the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), accessed October 13th, 2022)

Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines. Get tested if you have symptoms. Wear a mask if you have symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19. Wear a mask on public transportation. You may choose to wear a mask at any time as an additional precaution to protect yourself and others.

Active Cases/Week Broken Down by Age Group

Watauga County



Active Clusters and Outbreaks in Watauga County

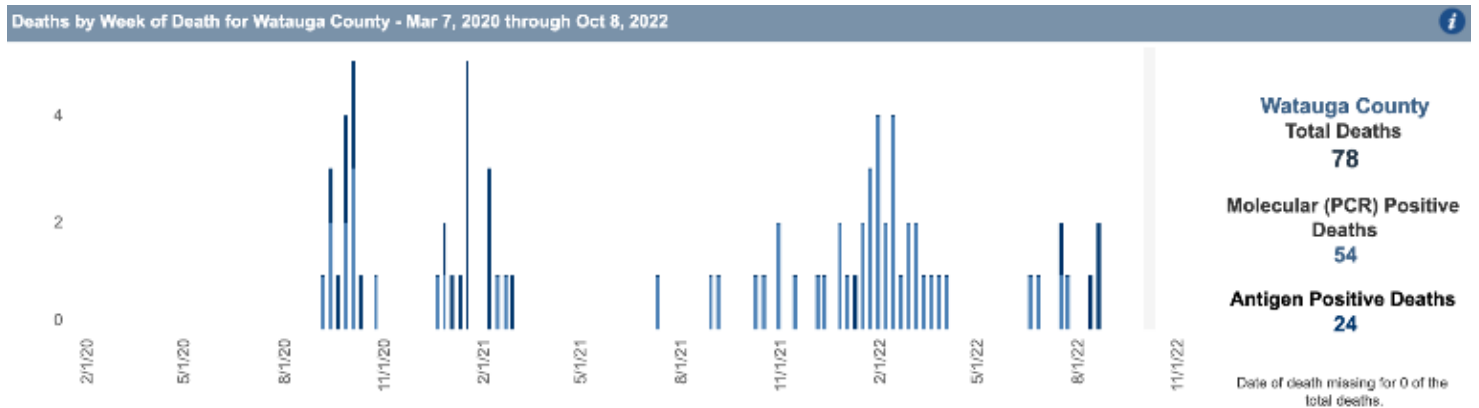
The current cluster and outbreak information for congregate living, childcare and educational settings in our district can be viewed at the [NC DHHS Cluster and Outbreak reports](#). An outbreak is defined as two or more laboratory confirmed cases within a 28 day period in a congregate living setting. A cluster is defined as a minimum of five cases within a 14-day period and plausible epidemiologic linkage between cases. An outbreak or cluster is considered active until 28 days have passed with no newly identified cases.

[Click here to view COVID-19 case and trend distribution by demographic groups for Watauga County.](#)

COVID-19 Related Deaths

The majority of COVID-19 related deaths occur among individuals who are unvaccinated. Staying up to date on vaccination, including boosters recommended by the CDC, remains the most effective way to prevent severe outcomes like severe illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

North Carolina now uses an electronic death certificate system which has identified additional deaths that occurred January 1 through March 31, 2022. The total deaths for Watauga County residents is 78 (as of 10/12/2022).



For additional data related to COVID-19 deaths, visit the [NC DHHS COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#).

Regional COVID-19 Hospitalization Data

The hospitalization data reflected is for the Triad Health Preparedness Coalition Region (THPC), which includes Watauga County. All hospitalization data is from [NCDHHS' Hospitalization Data Dashboard](#). (All data is current as of 10/12/2022)



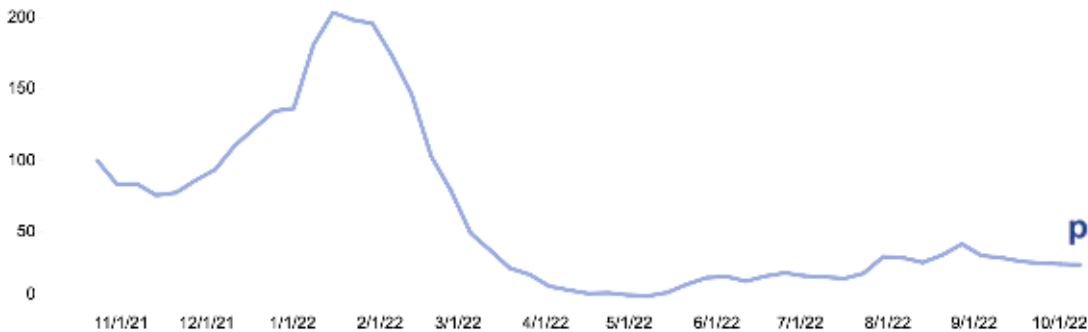
CapRAC - Capital Region Healthcare Preparedness Coalition
 DHPC - Duke Healthcare Preparedness Coalition
 EHPC - Eastern Healthcare Preparedness Coalition
 MAHPC - Mountain Area Healthcare Preparedness Coalition
 MCRHC - Mid-Carolina Regional Healthcare Preparedness Coalition
 MHPCC - Metroline Healthcare Preparedness Coalition
 SHPR - Southeastern Healthcare Preparedness Region
 THPC - Triad Healthcare Preparedness Coalition

Currently Hospitalized COVID-19 Patients in THPC



180
 Currently COVID-19 hospitalized patients as of 10/8/2022

Number of COVID-19 Adult ICU Patients in THPC



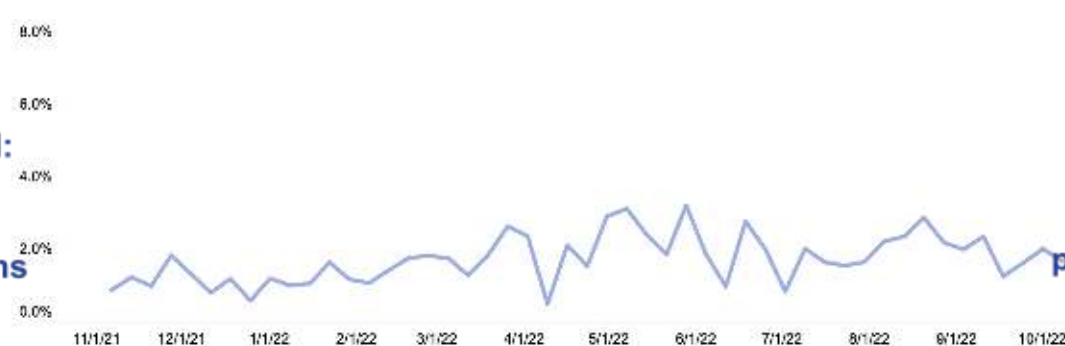
27
 Current COVID-19 adult ICU patients as of 10/8/2022

Weekly COVID-19 Hospital Severity Trend: Percent of Patients on a Ventilator in THPC



6%
 Of currently hospitalized COVID-19 patients on a ventilator as of 10/8/2022

Weekly COVID-19 Hospital Severity Trend: Percent of Pediatric Hospitalizations in THPC



1.7%
 Of currently hospitalized COVID-19 patients are pediatric as of 10/8/2022

North Carolina COVID-19 Case Updates

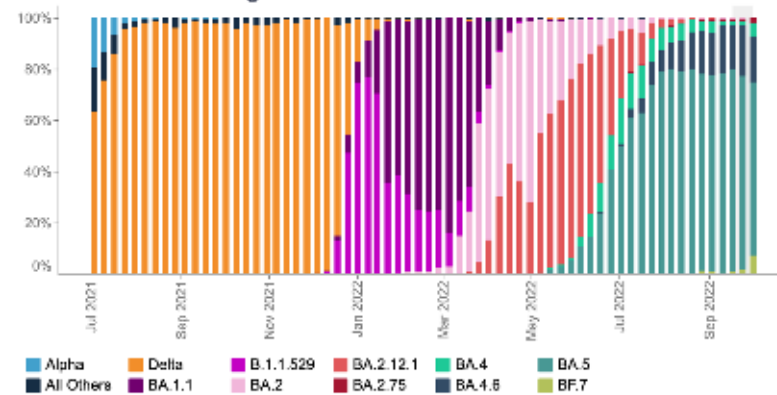
North Carolina State Synopsis

The North Carolina COVID-19 State Synopsis can be viewed at: [COVID-19 State Profile Report](#), which is provided by White House COVID-19 Team, Joint Coordination Cell, Data Strategy and Execution Workgroup.

COVID-19 Variants Detected in North Carolina by Week

The Omicron variants seem to spread more easily and quickly than other variants, which may lead to more cases of COVID-19. Current COVID-19 vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths from the COVID-19 variants. The best way to protect yourself is by getting a COVID-19 vaccination, and booster once eligible.

What variants are being detected in North Carolina?



Last Two Weeks
Sep 18, 2022 - Oct 01, 2022

Category	Type	Sequenced Cases	% of Total
Omicron	BA.2	1	0.14%
	BA.2.75	7	0.96%
	BA.4	15	2.05%
	BA.4.6	144	19.67%
	BA.5	550	75.14%
	BF.7	15	2.05%

Data on COVID-19 Variants Detected in North Carolina by Week was accessed from and can be viewed at: [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' COVID-19 Surveillance Study](#).

State Wastewater Surveillance Data

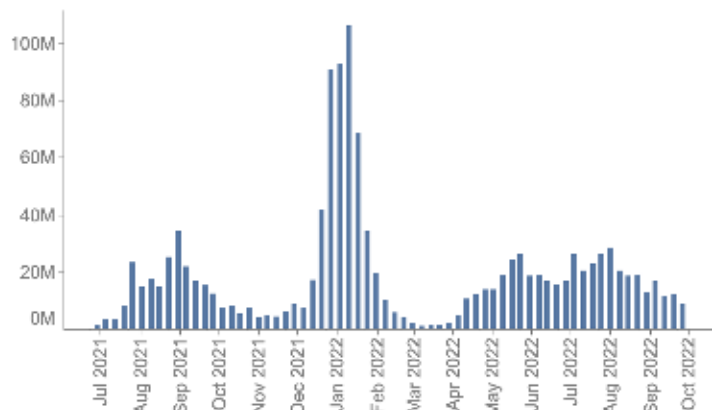
NC Department of Health and Human Services is collecting wastewater samples from an increasing set of participating wastewater treatment plants across NC to test for levels of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Individuals infected with COVID-19 shed viral particles in their stool, which can be measured in wastewater. This metric will be increasingly important in measuring the amount of virus at the community level, as it provides information regarding the levels of virus independently of testing participation or reporting.

State wastewater surveillance data is from the NC DHHS dashboard, where it is updated weekly and can be accessed [here](#).

8.5 Million Previous Week 11.8 Million

COVID-19 Virus Particles Found in Wastewater

COVID-19 virus particles appearing in wastewater can signal how quickly the virus is spreading, even if people don't get tested or have symptoms.



Average COVID-19 virus copies found per person per week from participating North Carolina wastewater treatment plants. [More Info](#)

Alleghany (336) 372-5641 | Ashe (336) 246-9449 | Watauga (828) 264-4995

AppHealthCare COVID-19 Call Center: (828) 795-1970

General COVID-19 Questions: preparedness@apphealth.com

Media inquiries: media@apphealth.com

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