

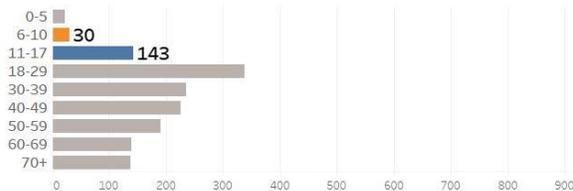
**NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: October 1st, 2021

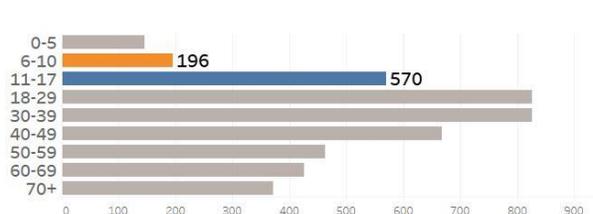
**COVID-19 cases in children more than tripled in the start of this school year compared to last. Public Health urges residents to take precautions in school and social settings.**

SOUTH CENTRAL IDAHO – South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) warns families COVID-19 is spreading more quickly among children than any other time in the pandemic. In the absence of masking and social distancing protocols in some schools, SCPHD urges families to choose personal actions that will protect their children and communities.

Cases by age in September of 2020



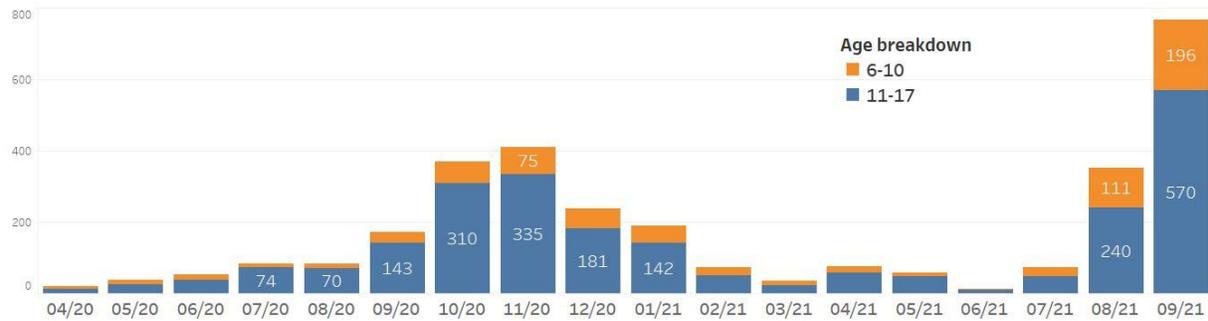
Cases by age in September of 2021



Comparing September of 2021 with 2020, data shows cases are considerably higher in all ages this year, and have nearly quadrupled in children between the ages of six and seventeen.

Comparing September to the last year and a half, data show cases in children are outpacing any other month in the pandemic so far.

Cases in school-aged children (6-17) by month in south central Idaho



“Children are less likely to die from COVID-19 but that doesn’t mean they can’t get very sick or spread the disease to more vulnerable people around them,” said Heather Park, SCPHD School Liaison. “Some local schools have been forced to temporarily shut their doors because so many staff are out sick, others are scrambling to find enough COVID-19 testing supplies because so many kids are coming to school sick.”

In addition to COVID-19 cases, schools in the region have reported an increase in other diseases and conditions spreading through the students and staff. These reported illnesses include impetigo and RSV- both conditions that primarily spread through close proximity and touch.

“A little bit of extra illness when school starts is expected- but what we’re seeing now is far from normal. Our community is battling a wave of illness that continues to overwhelm our hospitals and is starting to affect our local school’s ability to keep kids in class,” said Park. “The good news is the same efforts that help prevent the spread of COVID-19 will also help prevent the spread of most other common school illnesses.”

These precautions include:

- Vaccinating against preventable illnesses
- Staying home when you are sick
- Wearing a mask around people you don’t live with
- Keeping 6 feet between you and people you don’t live with when you aren’t wearing a mask
- Washing your hands regularly and avoiding unnecessary touch to common surfaces and people you don’t live with
- Eating a healthy and balanced diet
- Getting enough sleep
- Exercising regularly

If you have any questions about COVID-19, the vaccine, or preventative efforts please reach out to the SCPHD hotline: Spanish at (208) 737-5965, English at (208) 737-1138.

See more case data for children in your county here: <https://tabsoft.co/39ISd47>

Please refer to <https://phd5.idaho.gov/coronavirus> for the latest local numbers, guidance and resources. Refer to <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov> for Idaho-specific information and guidance.