

Virus pushes some California hospitals near ICU capacity

4 September 2021



In this May 19, 2020, file photo, Karen Parker-Bryant, 64, raises a hand skyward after she was released from Clovis Community Hospital after a battle with COVID-19, in Fresno, Calif. Hospitals in the heart of California's Central Valley are running out of beds in their intensive care units because of an influx of coronavirus patients, prompting officials on Friday, Sept. 3, 2021, to declare an official "surge." Credit: John Walker/The Fresno Bee via AP, File

Hospitals in the heart of California's Central Valley are running out of beds in their intensive care units, state officials announced Friday, as a more contagious version of the coronavirus continues to spread primarily among the unvaccinated population.

Hospitals in the eight-county San Joaquin Valley region have had fewer than 10% of staffed adult ICU beds for three consecutive days. State officials labeled it a "surge," triggering special rules announced last month that require nearby hospitals to accept transfer patients.

In Fresno County and neighboring counties, the number of confirmed and suspected coronavirus patients in hospitals is more than double what it

was four weeks ago, the [Fresno Bee reported](#).

In San Joaquin County, new virus cases and the number of people admitted to hospitals has surpassed the peak numbers of cases and patients during last summer's surge, according to the county health officer. But a spokeswoman for the county's Office of Emergency Services said the county had enough hospital beds to avoid transferring patients out of the county as of Friday.

If the problem gets worse and ICU capacity falls to zero, the state says hospitals across California must also accept transfer patients.

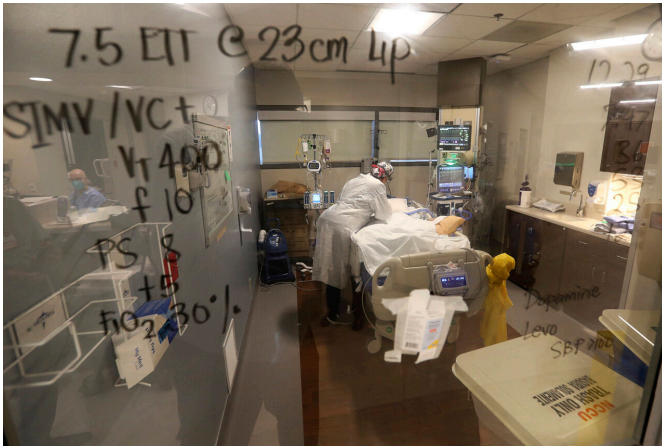
Statewide, new coronavirus cases have declined following a surge attributed to the delta variant, a more contagious and dangerous version of the virus. Tuesday, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced more than 80% of Californians 12 and older have received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine—putting California among the highest vaccine rates in the country.



In this Dec. 29, 2020, file photo, Memorial Hospital registered nurse Steve Menchaca, right, and Emily Rentquiano tend to a patient in the COVID-19 intensive care unit in Bakersfield, Calif. Hospitals in the heart of California's Central Valley are running out of beds in their

intensive care units because of an influx of coronavirus patients. State officials announced Friday, Sept. 3, 2021, that hospitals in the 12-county San Joaquin Valley region have had fewer than 10% of staffed adults ICU beds for three consecutive days. Credit: Alex Horvath/The Bakersfield Californian via AP, File

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In this Dec. 29, 2020, file photo, Memorial Hospital registered nurse Kari Carrell cares for a patient in the COVID-19 intensive care unit in Bakersfield, Calif. Hospitals in the heart of California's Central Valley are running out of beds in their intensive care units because of an influx of coronavirus patients. State officials announced Friday, Sept. 3, 2021, that hospitals in the 12-county San Joaquin Valley region have had fewer than 10% of staffed adults ICU beds for three consecutive days. Credit: Alex Horvath/The Bakersfield Californian via AP, File

But coronavirus-related hospitalizations in the state have continued to climb. As of Thursday, 8,630 people were hospitalized because of the coronavirus across the state, more than five times higher the number of people hospitalized on July 1.

"This is still primarily, overwhelmingly, a pandemic of the unvaccinated," Newsom said Tuesday.

This story has been corrected to say that the San Joaquin Valley region is made up of eight counties.

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