

**The Alabama Department of Public Health  
Alabama Emergency Response Technology (ALERT)  
Health Alert Network (HAN)  
August 5, 2021**

**Alabama Hospital Emergency Rooms Seeing Patient Surge**

As cases of COVID-19 in Alabama increase rapidly, subsequent hospitalizations due to the virus have risen at a rate not previously seen. Alabama hospitals have been admitting significantly more COVID-19 patients recently, including COVID-19 patients who are younger, sicker and unvaccinated. As a result, emergency rooms are being overwhelmed at this crucial time.

Please ask patients not to go to Alabama hospitals simply for COVID-19 testing. Also ask them to avoid the ER for minor injuries or other non-emergency problems. A news release was sent out on August 4, 2021, asking patients to only go to emergency rooms for true emergencies. The news release requests that patients call their healthcare provider or go to an urgent care center with minor needs in order to reserve the emergency room for more serious medical problems. Your assistance is needed in assuring that patients are aware of this request. They should also be informed that ERs are dealing with an increase in COVID-19 infections and that they increase their risk of infection by going for non-emergency problems.

Persons should be advised to mask up if they have to go to the emergency room because of suspected urgent or emergency health conditions to help protect themselves and others. Remind them of the following symptoms and ask them to seek medical attention immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

COVID-19 testing locations can be identified by accessing the ADPH COVID-19 Table, <https://dph1.adph.state.al.us/covid-19/>, which provides a list of COVID-19 testing sites. Patients should be directed to call the site for additional information before visiting.

For more information, visit [alabamapublichealth.gov](http://alabamapublichealth.gov).