



Illinois Health and Hospital Association

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**With COVID Spiking Statewide, Hospitals, Doctors and Nurses Plead:
*“Don’t Let Your Guard Down. Keep Your Mask Up.”***

Naperville—With COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations surging in all areas of the state, the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA) has launched a new statewide campaign—***Don’t let your guard down. Keep your mask up.***—to communicate the importance of taking reasonable precautions to curb the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

“We are seeing hospitalizations reach new highs just before the holiday season when friends and families look forward to getting together,” A.J. Wilhelmi, President and CEO of IHA, which represents over 200 hospitals and 40 health systems statewide, said. Just this week, COVID hospitalizations surpassed the previous peak from the spring. Healthcare professionals in hospitals throughout Illinois are working extremely hard to provide care to COVID patients, while continuing to provide necessary healthcare to non-COVID patients.

“We can rein in this virus, but all of us must act now and take the following effective steps to protect our families, our communities and ourselves,” he added.

- **Wear** your mask.
- **Watch** your distance – stay at least six feet from others.
- **Wash** your hands frequently.
- **Avoid** travel or having people in your homes who have traveled.

“COVID fatigue and a desire to return to normalcy are certainly understandable, especially eight months into the pandemic,” Wilhelmi added. “But letting our guard down will help fuel the increase in cases and hospitalizations, and will result in lives lost. Let’s redouble our efforts together.”

Doctors, nurses and all healthcare providers on the front lines are asking all Illinois residents to help stop the spread. “We know this is particularly challenging as we approach the holidays,” Wilhelmi added. “We all want to celebrate with family and friends, but we need to carefully

consider our choices. The decisions we make now will help us get control of this second surge, protecting the health of our families, ourselves and our friends.”

Wilhelmi also urged everyone to get a flu shot. “While a flu shot will not protect you against COVID, avoiding the flu will help you keep your lungs and immune system healthier during this pandemic. It’s about keeping your body’s defenses as prepared as possible to fight the virus.”

“If everyone works together, we will get through this,” he added. “Now is not the time to let your guard down. Simple actions like ‘masking up’ can have a significant impact in curbing the spread and reversing the surge.”

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About IHA

The Illinois Health and Hospital Association, with offices in Chicago, Naperville, Springfield and Washington, D.C., advocates for Illinois’ more than 200 hospitals and nearly 40 health systems as they serve their patients and communities. IHA members provide a broad range of services—not just within their walls, but across the continuum of healthcare and in their communities. Reflecting the diversity of the state, IHA members consist of nonprofit, investor-owned and public hospitals in the following categories: community, safety net, rural, critical access, specialty and teaching hospitals, including academic medical centers. For more information, see [team-iha.org](https://www.team-iha.org).

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