

# *Delta variant fuels U.S. pandemic, hitting southern states hardest*

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Arkansas governor said Monday only eight ICU beds were available. Asa Hutchinson said, "We saw the largest single-day increase in hospitalizations and have eclipsed our previous high of COVID hospitalizations."

The Republican governor urged Arkansans to be vaccinated as many of his constituents have been hesitant to do in part because of widespread disinformation about COVID-19 vaccines.

In Texas, Governor Greg Abbott asked hospitals to postpone elective surgeries. The variant has also raged through Louisiana, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and other southern states grappling with low vaccination rates.

Louisiana has reported record-high hospitalizations, with the state's health department saying ninety-one percent of the patients hospitalized with COVID-19 are not fully vaccinated.

Florida also reported 134,506 new coronavirus cases in the first week of August.

In Mississippi, the state's governor said the Delta variant is becoming a "pandemic of the unvaccinated". The Mississippi Department of Health said Monday ninety-seven percent of all new cases are unvaccinated.

U.S. top infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci warns of "worse variant" that could impact the vaccinated if COVID-19 is allowed to keep mutating in vaccinated US population. The COVID-19 cases have averaged 100,000 for three days in a row across the US, up 35% over the past week, according to a Reuters tally of public health data.

U.S. hospitalizations also rose 40% and deaths registered an 18% rise nationwide in the past week. The number of children hospitalized is also rising across the country, with health experts attributing the trend to the Delta variant being more likely to infect children than the original virus.

As the Delta variant caused new cases and deaths, and once again upended Americans' lives after a brief summer lull, the push to vaccinate those still reluctant has now gained momentum. The Pentagon said Monday it will seek Biden's approval by the middle of September to require military members to get vaccinated.

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