

Minnesota health officials see cases of Delta variant spreading

The Minnesota Department of Health says 99.9% of Minnesotans who are vaccinated have not gotten the coronavirus since. But among those who aren't vaccinated, the new and highly-transmissible Delta variant of the disease is becoming more widespread.

"It makes me a little bit nervous just to see whether or not we're going to get back into lockdown, because the summer of freedom we're starting to have again feels like old times, so I don't want to go backwards," said Joe Greising, a Minnesotan who has gotten his vaccine.

"The variants are making it much harder to move forward successfully," said Minnesota Department of Health Director Kris Ehresmann. Ehresmann is watching the situation unfold closely.

"Missouri is just one state away and they have seen a great deal of Delta circulating," Ehresmann said.

As of Monday in Minnesota, about 66% of those 16 and older have had at least one shot, and 63% of those eligible are fully vaccinated.

"We're in a precarious place right now, we are in a better place than some states because of the vaccination," Ehresmann said.

But in the last month and a half, the variant has grown to account for a larger proportion of new cases in Minnesota.

"Well over 15 or more percent of all the cases we're seeing...we've seen a total of 129 Delta cases in the state," Ehresmann said. "Are they more severe? That's continuing to be looked at, but certainly our data shows a higher proportion of cases are hospitalized."

Ehresmann says the solution is more vaccinations, both to stop the spread of the virus and prevent new variants.

