

NEWS

Coronavirus deaths set a record in Collier County in July as cases doubled and tests lagged

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July proved to be the deadliest month for Collier County residents since the novel coronavirus pandemic began in Florida in March.

According to a Naples Daily News analysis of data compiled by the state Department of Health, the total number of reported COVID-19 deaths in Collier grew by 65% during July, from 74 entering the month to 122 last Friday. The 48 deaths reported during July surpassed the county's previous high for reported deaths in a month since the pandemic began in March, which was 30 in May.

Statewide, reported deaths from COVID-19 increased at an even higher rate during July, jumping by 95% from 3,505 to 6,843.

The spread of COVID-19 continued to widen in Collier County in July. According to state health data, Collier added a monthly record of more than 5,300 positive cases, increasing from 4,225 at the end of June to 9,581 Friday, a rise of 127%. That percentage increase was less than the growth in total cases from May to June (175%).

Florida ended July with 470,386 coronavirus cases, compared to 152,434 during the previous four months combined, an increase of 209%.

Just like in June, Collier County's pace of reported tests did not match its rise in positive cases. According to the state, the county reported more than 24,000 tests in July, a 73% increase from its total number through June. However, that's significantly lower than the

127% jump in cases. As a result, Collier's overall positivity rate rose by more than three percentage points, from 12.51% at the end of June to 16.36% last Friday.

A comparatively low testing rate has been a persistent issue for Collier County. While it ended July ranked 10th among Florida counties in total COVID-19 cases, Collier is just 19th in tests. Every other Florida county that is in the top 10 for most cases is among the top nine in total tests. Collier's positivity percentage is second only to Dade County (19%), the epicenter of Florida's COVID-19 outbreak, among counties with at least 2,600 cases.

Prior to July, Collier County had recorded nine days with at least 100 COVID-19 cases and one with more than 200 cases, all but one of which was reported in June. In July, the county reported 27 days with more than 100 cases and nine with more than 200, including a single-day record 286 on July 13. During the month, Collier averaged 173 cases per day. The day with the fewest cases reported in Collier during July (69 on July 25) was 77% greater than the county's overall daily case average entering the month (39).

In the final days of July, the state started releasing a daily pediatric report which tracks COVID-19 cases for those 17 years of age or younger. Through July 31, Collier County had 1,072 such cases, 10th most among Florida counties. Collier's pediatric positivity rate of 21.9% was second-highest among the 23 counties with at least 300 cases.

Statewide, Florida reported 36,979 COVID-19 cases among those ages 17 and younger and an overall positivity rate of 14.9%.

Growth of COVID-19 in Collier County

Total cases reported

March 31: 146

April 30: 596

May 31: 1,539

June 30: 4,225

July 31: 9,581

Total deaths reported

March 31: 1

April 30: 19

May 31: 49

June 30: 74

July 31: 122

Total hospitalizations reported

March 31: N/A

April 30: N/A

May 31: 202

June 30: 323

July 31: 654

Total tests reported

March 31: 1,356

April 30: 5,497

May 31: 16,770

June 30: 33,777

July 31: 58,570

Cumulative percent of people testing positive

March 31: 10.77%

April 30: 10.84%

May 31: 9.18%

June 30: 12.51%

July 31: 16.36%

Source: Florida Department of Health