

Flashing red on college campuses: As schools reopen, universities emerge as COVID petri dishes

[Researchers] studied 30 [US college] campuses nationwide with the highest numbers of reported [coronavirus](#) cases and found that more than half had spikes that peaked well above 1,000 cases per 100,000 people per week within the first two weeks of class.

On some campuses, 1 in 5 students had been infected with the virus by the end of the fall term. Four of the schools had more than 5,000 cases.

On 17 of the campuses, computer modeling showed that college outbreaks were also directly connected with infection peaks in the counties where the schools were located.

Luckily, the researchers also found that strict management of outbreaks — such as immediately switching from in-person to online learning — can lower infection peaks within about two weeks.

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“Policymakers often use an incidence of 50 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people per week as a threshold for high-risk counties, states, or countries. All 30 institutions in our study exceeded this value, three even by two orders of that magnitude,” [author Hannah] Lu said in a journal news release.

“The number of students who had become infected just throughout the fall is more than twice the national average since the beginning of the [outbreak](#) of 5.3%, with 17.3 million reported cases at a population of 328.2 million,” she noted.

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