December 2, 2021
Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

Unvaccinated causing strain on hospitals, health systems

As Michigan continues to record high numbers of COVID-19 cases, new data from the Michigan Health & Hospital Association (MHA) proves that the majority of Michigan residents severely sick with COVID-19 are unvaccinated. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and MHA are pleading with residents to get vaccinated for their own health, the safety of Michigan’s health care personnel, and to avoid additional strain on health care systems that are already stretched and struggling to respond.

Locally, the McLaren and Munson health systems, which serve the Health Department of Northwest Michigan and other counties across the region, are experiencing similar problems with pressure put on limited bed availability, and an overburdened staff.

“Vaccination is our most powerful tool,” said Dr. Josh Meyerson, Medical Director with the Health Department. MDHHS data from January 15-November 19 demonstrates that unvaccinated people account for 85.8% of COVID cases, 87% of hospitalizations, and 86.4% of deaths, Dr. Meyerson noted.

The data is clear: if you are unvaccinated, you are risking hospitalization or death, health officials said. “Getting vaccinated keeps you and your loved ones safe as we gather together this holiday,” Dr. Meyerson said.

Based on recent data from most Michigan health systems, MHA has found that three out of four COVID patients are unvaccinated (76%), 87% of COVID ICU patients are unvaccinated and 88% of COVID ventilator patients are unvaccinated.

Michigan's number of hospitalized COVID-19 cases reached a new high this week, with 4,291 patients hospitalized. Recently, Michigan reached 70% of residents 16 and older who have received their first vaccine dose, but cases are surging in the unvaccinated population.

MDHHS and the local health department are monitoring for the COVID-19 omicron variant which had not been detected in the state as of the time of this release. Residents are advised that the presence of variants makes it even more important to get vaccinated, including the booster doses to increase protection, wear masks, and take other precautions.

In addition to getting vaccinated and wearing masks – particularly indoors and in crowded areas – other things people can do to protect themselves and their loved ones include:

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

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• Getting tested for COVID-19, especially before gatherings.
• Physically distancing from others and avoiding crowds.
• Washing hands frequently with soap and water and cleaning hands with alcohol-based hand rub.
• Covering your mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
• Self-isolating until you recover if you develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19.

MDHHS has issued a public health advisory that all Michiganders, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a mask in indoor public settings and those who are not fully vaccinated or who are immunocompromised should avoid large crowds or gatherings.

For a list of vaccine providers and locations in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties, click here. To schedule an appointment with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan exclusively for children 5 to 11 years old, click here. To schedule an appointment with the health department for anyone 12 and older, click here. A parent/guardian must accompany anyone younger than 18 to a COVID-19 clinic. Please bring an insurance card to the appointment. Anyone with questions or unable to find a time or date that works for them and/or their child may call the health department at 800-432-4121.

To find a test site in the area, visit http://www.nwhealth.org/covid19main.html.

Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction by liking and following our Facebook page and visiting our COVID-19 Data Dashboard. To locate a testing facility, visit the Michigan COVID-19 Test Finder website. To track the risk levels of COVID-19 pandemic indicators, visit the Mi Safe Start Map website. For more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the MDHHS vaccine website or the CDC vaccine website.