December 9, 2021
Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

Best holiday present: Flu and COVID vaccines to protect loved ones

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is observing National Influenza Vaccination Week by urging residents to receive vaccines against highly contagious illnesses as soon as possible. Anyone can get the flu or COVID-19, including healthy children and adults. Getting the flu vaccine and an initial or booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and your family.

Flu Vaccine
Every person six months and older should get an annual flu vaccine, especially certain groups considered at the highest risk, like young children, pregnant women, adults who have chronic health conditions, or adults over the age of 50. People with asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and many other chronic health conditions are at higher risk of developing serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization or even death. In addition, the flu vaccine reduces an individual’s risk of being hospitalized due to influenza, freeing up hospital space, equipment, and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 Booster
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have recommended that all persons age 18 and older receive a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose to help protect individuals personally and help curb overall transmission in communities. If your original vaccine was an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna), you should wait six months after the initial series to get a booster. However, the wait is only two months if you received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. The booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine provides an additional layer of protection against COVID-19 and its variants currently circulating across the world, the United States and in Michigan.

“During this holiday season as you are gathering with family and friends, now is the time to make sure you have the best level of protection for yourself and others and get your flu vaccine and COVID-19 initial dose or booster,” said Dr. Josh Meyerson, Medical Director with the health department. It takes two weeks after a second dose of Pfizer or Moderna or after the first and only dose of J&J to be considered fully vaccinated – just in time for the holidays.

Symptoms of influenza, which are similar to COVID-19 symptoms, include fever or feeling feverish/chilled, body aches, cough, sore throat, or fatigue. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent both viruses. If you receive a vaccination and still get the flu or COVID-19, the vaccine may make symptoms milder and the length of illness shorter. The vaccine will also prevent you from spreading the virus to others, including those at risk of more serious illness. Other preventive actions recommended to reduce the risk of COVID-19 also help reduce the risk of flu transmission include:

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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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• Wear a face mask while indoors in public.
• Get tested for COVID-19 when you have symptoms, 3-5 days after you are exposed to someone with COVID-19 and just prior to a gathering
• Socially distance while in gatherings.
• Stay home when you are sick.
• Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
• Clean your hands often, with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

To date, 31.7% of eligible residents in the four-county jurisdiction of the health department have received their flu vaccine and 65.3% of eligible residents (5 years and older) have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Additional flu vaccination data can be found by visiting the Michigan Flu Vaccination Dashboard.

Flu and COVID-19 vaccinations – including booster shots – are widely available at pharmacies, health care providers and health department clinics. For a list of vaccine providers and locations in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties, click here. To schedule a flu vaccine, call the Health Department of Northwest Michigan at 1-800-432-4121.

To schedule a COVID-19 vaccination appointment with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan exclusively for children 5 to 11 years old, click here. To schedule a COVID-19 vaccination 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.