

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID Variants and Updates

Cases of the Delta variant are increasing throughout the state and in southwest Nebraska. In Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) these Delta variant cases have been related to travel as well as large gatherings.

Confirmed positive cases in vaccinated persons were sent to the Nebraska Public Health Lab for sequencing to find out if they were caused by a variant of COVID-19. Over 90% of the COVID cases in vaccinated persons in Nebraska so far have been from variants, and most of these cases have had mild illness. **Persons who had COVID-19 last fall and are not currently vaccinated may not have an immunity to the Delta variant.**

All three COVID vaccines approved for use in the United States provide protection against severe illness, hospitalization, or death from COVID-19. All currently hospitalized cases of COVID-19 in the health district are in unvaccinated people aged 20 to 49. Researchers have found no evidence that having had COVID-19 before offers any protection against being reinfected with one of the variant strains.

Vaccination against COVID-19 is the most effective method to prevent another wave of the pandemic. **SWNPHD is concentrating on vaccinating children aged 12 and older before the start of the school year. Dr Kari Simonsen of Children's Hospital in Omaha recently stated, "The point of vaccinating is to protect these children; herd immunity is a bonus. The risks of COVID outweigh the risks of vaccine side effects, and we strongly recommend getting your children vaccinated. COVID was one of the top ten causes of death of 12- to 15-year-olds in the US in 2020. We wouldn't not try to prevent any of these other top ten causes of death, such as motor vehicle accidents, and COVID is no different."**

Vaccine is available in SW Nebraska in the following areas:

Keith County: USave Pharmacy, Safeway Pharmacy and Walmart Pharmacy.

Perkins County: Perkins County Hospital

Chase County: Adams Drug, Chase County Clinic

Dundy County: Quality Care Clinic

Red Willow County: SW Nebraska Public Health Department, Red Willow County Health, Farrell's Pharmacy, U Save Pharmacy and Walmart Pharmacy

Furnas County: Mark's Pharmacy and Tri Valley Health Systems.

Call these locations to get your vaccine.

SWNPHD also strongly encourages using the recommended precautions of frequent handwashing, wearing a mask over your nose and mouth if you are not vaccinated, staying home if you are sick,

and staying away from others that may be sick. Avoid enclosed crowded spaces or gatherings. If you do participate in large gatherings and are unvaccinated, the recommendation is to wear a mask. When traveling, state and local recommendations vary. Always follow all recommended guidelines from TSA and the country of travel, which can be found at tsa.gov and state.gov.

SWNPHD had 33 new cases of COVID-19 reported from June 22nd to July 11th. Ten of these cases were identified in an audit of previous case data from the fall peak. A breakout by county includes Chase County-5, Dundy County-1, Frontier County-7, Furnas County-11, Hayes County-2, Hitchcock County-0, Keith County-1, Perkins County-0, and Red Willow County-6, bringing the total number of cases to 3,900. SWNPHD and their local partners have vaccinated 16,836 individuals against COVID-19. So far 39% of southwest Nebraska residents have been vaccinated.

COVID-19 information can be found at swhealth.ne.gov. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook and can be reached by calling 308-345-4223.

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