

NEWS RELEASE

November 29, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Booster Shots Approved for Everyone Ages 18 and Over

The FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have expanded the recommendations for booster shots of the COVID-19 vaccine to now include all adults ages 18 years and older. The decision to expand eligibility was based on the latest research data on boosters and third doses that have already been administered in the U.S. and in other countries, which showed the booster shots increase protection against COVID-19, including the widely circulating Delta variant.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages residents to talk to their doctor or pharmacist about getting a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine, which is available at SWNPHD, Red Willow County Health Department, local pharmacies, and participating providers across the health district.

The protection against mild and moderate disease has been gradually reducing after 6 months or more from the first and second doses of COVID vaccine. These initial doses are proving to still be very effective at preventing severe disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. According to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), data from the State Health Information Exchange and Nebraska State Immunization Information System show that Nebraskans who are not fully vaccinated are at least 10 times more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19.

“Getting vaccinated against COVID-19, including booster shots, will help reduce the strain our hospitals are under due to the high numbers of respiratory illnesses spreading in southwest Nebraska this fall,” states Melissa Propp, Public Health Nurse at SWNPHD. “Other helpful actions include avoiding the 3 C’s: crowds, close contact, and closed spaces. It is not too late to get a flu shot as well and be protected against the severe strain of influenza we are seeing this year.”

SWNPHD had 166 new cases of COVID-19 reported from November 23 to November 29, 2021, with an average of 173 cases per week in the last 30 days. A breakdown by age includes: 0 to 19 – 18; 20 to 29 – 26; 30 to 39 – 27; 40 to 49 – 23; 50 to 59 – 27; 60 to 69 – 30; 70 to 79 – 10; 80 and over – 5. The total number of cases is 5,827.

Four additional deaths due to COVID-19 were also reported, including one confirmed and three probable. DHHS is now including probable COVID-19 deaths in their reporting, meaning that a case meets vital records criteria (a death certificate that lists COVID-19 disease or SARS-CoV-2 as an underlying cause of death or a significant condition contributing to death) with no lab test for SARS-CoV-2. If there is a positive lab test and COVID-19 is listed on the death certificate, the death is reported as confirmed.

SWNPHD is conducting a survey about what is affecting the health of residents in the district. The survey is available at the website www.swhealth.ne.gov/featured/2 where residents can share their experiences and concerns regarding access to healthcare, health risks for their area, and progress or barriers they have encountered. Local pharmacies also have a card with the survey link available, and paper surveys are available at SWNPHD. 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. The website www.swhealth.ne.gov contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties.

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