

## News Release

### **For Immediate Release**

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### **Time for Flu Shots and COVID-19 Shots**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages residents to get their flu shots and COVID-19 shot updates to protect against respiratory illnesses this winter. SWNPHD has seen an increase of COVID-19 cases over the past few weeks, following the late summer wave of infections seen across most of the country. Last year SWNPHD gave over 400 flu shots and 125 COVID shots, with pharmacies and clinics giving many more as well.

Influenza (flu) is a potentially fatal, contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. Flu vaccines make it less likely that you will get the flu; if you do get the flu, it keeps your symptoms from becoming serious, lowering the risk of needing medical care or hospitalization.

Everyone ages 6 months and older are recommended to get the updated flu vaccines. Flu shots are available at local clinics, at pharmacies, community shot clinics, and at SWNPHD offices in McCook and Ogallala.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people infected with this virus experience mild illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some people become seriously ill and need medical attention. The COVID vaccines reduce the risk of developing severe complications, hospitalization, long COVID symptoms, or death.

Recommendations for COVID vaccinations have changed since last season:

- This year anyone aged 65 and over is eligible for a COVID vaccine. Those 6 months of age to 64 years of age may get it based on individual decision making, also known as shared clinical decision making. This means you should speak to a healthcare provider such as a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist prior to vaccination.
- The CDC still recommends vaccination especially for populations at higher risk of severe COVID-19, including adults aged 65 and older, persons with underlying medical conditions, pregnant people, residents of long-term-care facilities, and the immunocompromised.
- Those at high risk for severe complications from COVID-19 such as someone who is immune compromised, has a medical condition, those who live with someone who is at high risk for COVID-19 complications, or those who have a high-risk job like working at a nursing home or hospital, are also recommended for COVID vaccine.

According to the CDC, it is safe and acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccine and flu vaccine during the same appointment. These are separate shots and are not combined into one shot. Check with your healthcare provider if you have questions about getting multiple vaccinations at one time.

For more information, call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, or view the website at [swhealth.ne.gov](http://swhealth.ne.gov) which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health.

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