



Panhandle Health District

Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Panhandle Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public Contact: 877-415-5225

Media Contact: Katherine Hoyer

January 12, 2022

208-415-5108

Panhandle Health District Reporting Sharp Increase in COVID-19 Case Numbers

PANHANDLE HEALTH DISTRICT – Over the past three weeks, Panhandle Health District (PHD) has seen a sharp increase in the daily COVID-19 case count with 283 cases being reported Monday and 213 reported last Friday. Case numbers are probably much higher than officially reported due to cases not reported and the lack of availability of testing resources. These unprecedented numbers are likely due to the District's low vaccination rate and other effective precautions not being taken by the community. According to the CDC's genomic surveillance site, the highly transmissible Omicron variant represents over 95% of the current case count in the Northwest region of the US representing Idaho, Alaska, Oregon, and Washington.

Research is emerging that the Omicron variant currently causes less severe illness, but PHD has reported an increase in hospitalizations in the region as well. Hospitalizations from COVID-19 tend to lag case numbers, sometimes up to several weeks, as it typically takes time for the infection to progress to a point where a person needs advanced care to manage the disease.

People who are unvaccinated, not fully vaccinated or boosted, and those with certain underlying or immune compromised conditions are at the greatest risk of severe illness and death from the virus. To date, 800 community members have lost their lives to the virus and over 2,700 have been hospitalized.

"We realize that the community is tired, and we all wished the Delta wave would have been the final surge, but Omicron is proving to spread even faster than the Delta variant. Right now, while cases are surging and the level of disease spread in our communities is high, I urge everyone to protect themselves and others," stated Don Duffy, PHD Director. "As we head into our third year of responding to this pandemic, we

ask the community to continue to be vigilant in practicing precautions to prevent the spread of this virus and get vaccinated.”

The COVID-19 vaccines, including booster doses, continue to be effective at reducing the risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. We continue to recommend that everyone 5 years of age or older get the COVID-19 vaccine, and that individuals 12 and older get a COVID-19 booster shot when they are eligible. To schedule an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine through PHD, visit <https://panhandlehealthdistrict.org/covid-19/vaccine/>. You may also visit <http://www.vaccines.gov> for a list of other providers throughout our region.

In addition to vaccination, other preventive strategies to minimize the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 include:

- Wearing a well-fitting face covering in public places
- Maintaining space between yourself and others
- Washing hands or using hand sanitizer
- Staying home when sick, whether from COVID-19 or other illnesses, to prevent unnecessarily spreading germs to others
- Getting tested for the virus and following the recommended guidance if you test positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive

CDC recently updated its guidelines for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and those who have been exposed to or come into contact with individuals who have COVID-19. Each situation is detailed below:

If You Test Positive for COVID-19

Everyone, regardless of vaccination status should:

- Stay home for 5 days from your symptom onset OR 5 days from test date if no symptoms.
- If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your house. If you have a fever, continue to stay home until your fever resolves.
- Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.

If You Were Exposed to Someone with COVID-19

If you:

Have been boosted **OR** completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 5 months **OR** completed the primary series of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months

- Wear a mask around others for 10 days.
- Test on day 5, if possible.
- If you develop symptoms get a test and stay home.

If you:

Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 5 months ago and are not boosted **OR** completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and are not boosted **OR** are unvaccinated

- Stay home for 5 days and wear a mask around others.
- If no symptoms are experienced during the five days, you can end isolation after day 5 while continuing to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
- Test on day 5 if possible.
- If you develop symptoms get a test and stay home

For more information, please go here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>.

For any questions, you may call PHD's COVID-19 Hotline at 877-415-5225.

#

Panhandle Health District provides over 40 different public health programs to families, individuals and organizations in northern Idaho. From food and drinking water safety to health education and disease control, public health services are critical to ensure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

The PHD team is made up of nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals with a common goal to deliver vital public health services.

Panhandle Health District is one of seven health districts in the state of Idaho.