



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
**Panhandle Health District**

## **Panhandle Health District**

*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

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### **NEWS RELEASE**

#### **Prepare for Respiratory Virus Season**

Panhandle Health District – September 15, 2023

Kids are back at school. Weather is cooling down. And it's respiratory virus season.

This fall and winter, we can expect flu, COVID, and RSV to be circulating along with the usual colds and bugs.

Each year, the flu vaccine is updated to match the circulating flu viruses. Typically flu vaccines protect against the three or four viruses that research suggests will be most common for that flu season. Since flu viruses are constantly changing, the vaccine is updated to provide the best protection.

“You want the flu vaccine to protect you throughout the entire flu season,” said Jennifer Dowell, registered nurse and Clinical Services Division Administrator at Panhandle Health District. “If you receive the vaccine too early, your protection against the flu virus could wane before the end of flu season.”

The best time to receive your flu vaccine is late September or October. Everyone 6 months and older is recommended to receive a flu vaccine annually.

Along with flu, experts have been monitoring a new COVID-19 variant that has been emerging. Cases of COVID have certainly declined in north Idaho over the past year and we are hopeful those numbers continue on that trend. With that said, other parts of the world and the U.S. are seeing a slight wave and there is a possibility that wave could grow this winter. New this fall, is an updated COVID-19 vaccine that will provide better protection against these latest variants.

“Similar to how the flu vaccine is altered each year to be more effective and targeted to fight the viruses that are circulating,” said Dowell, “the COVID vaccine will follow that process to offer the best protection as well. Viruses alter and change because they want to survive. This constant evolution is completely normal and expected.”

The COVID vaccines are specific to age groups, so consult with your provider to know what vaccine is correct for you.

Last, but not least, we do expect to see cases of RSV this fall and winter. RSV, respiratory syncytial virus, is common and typically causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Unfortunately, infants and older adults can experience a more severe illness and may need to be hospitalized. According to the CDC, each year, approximately 60,000-160,000 older adults in the U.S. are hospitalized due to RSV and 6,000-10,000 die of the infection.

Fortunately, there is an RSV vaccine available for adults aged 60 or older. Speak to your healthcare provider about receiving the RSV vaccine.

In addition to available vaccines, everyday preventive actions can stop the spread of these viruses:

- Stay home if you are sick
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Wash your hands often with soap
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects

PHD offers flu, RSV, and COVID vaccines by appointment at their locations in Hayden, Sandpoint, Bonners Ferry, St. Maries, and Kellogg. In addition to office appointments, the public may attend any of the following flu clinics to receive an influenza vaccine:

**PHD Hayden (drive-thru clinic)**

8500 N. Atlas Rd. Hayden  
9/26 & 10/18, 9am-3pm

**Christ our Redeemer (drive-thru clinic)**

1900 Pine St. Sandpoint (enter via N. Lincoln)  
9/27 & 10/4, 1-4pm

**PHD Bonners Ferry (drive-thru clinic)**

7402 Caribou St. Bonners Ferry  
10/6, 9am-1pm

**Sandpoint Senior Center**

820 Main St. Sandpoint  
10/11, 9am-1pm

**Bonners Ferry Senior Center**

6635 Lincoln St. Bonners Ferry  
10/13, 10am-12pm

Enjoy our beautiful cooler seasons, get vaccinated and keep your germs to yourself!

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**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.