



Media Release

For immediate release: December 21, 2022

Contact: Stephanie Badillo-Sanchez, Communications Specialist

509-941-7364

Yakima County Reports First Flu Death

Yakima, WA- The first flu death of the season, in Yakima County, has been reported to the Yakima Health District. The individual was over 65 years of age. Since mid-September, in Yakima County flu activity has been increasing rapidly. With COVID-19, the flu, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) widespread throughout Yakima County, the Yakima Health District is urging individuals to follow public health recommendations, including receiving a flu vaccine and COVID-19 bivalent booster. Staying up to date on vaccinations will help reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses and reduce individual's risk of severe illnesses.

Flu Vaccine

Everyone six months of age and older is recommended to receive an annual flu vaccine. Young children, pregnant women, [those with underlying health conditions](#), and people age 65 and older are at high risk for flu-related complications. The flu is a highly contagious disease that can cause mild to severe illness, and lead to hospitalization and death- even in healthy, young people. Getting a flu vaccine reduces the chances of getting the flu, and it can be safely given at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 Bivalent Booster

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) expanded its eligibility for the COVID-19 bivalent booster dose. Now everyone 6 months and older is eligible to receive a bivalent booster dose. Previously, it was only those 5 years and older. Parents who have children ages 6 months through 5 years who previously completed a Moderna primary series are eligible to receive a Moderna bivalent booster 2 months after their final primary series dose. Parents with children ages 6 months through 4 years who are currently completing a Pfizer primary series can receive a Pfizer bivalent vaccine as their third primary dose.

The COVID-19 bivalent boosters provide immunity against the original coronavirus strain and protects against the newer Omicron variants that account for most of the current cases.

Public Health Recommendations

In preparation for winter celebrations, the Yakima Health District encourages community members to practice public health recommendations to keep gatherings safer and healthier. The flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19 can all have similar symptoms, including fever, cough, fatigue, runny or stuffy nose, and several others. Using preventive measures can help reduce the risk of getting sick, such as:

- Receive your flu vaccine and COVID-19 bivalent booster
- Stay home if you are sick
- Do not seek medical care at the Emergency Room (ER's) unless symptoms are severe (shortness of breath, fever over 104F, severe muscle pain/weakness, persistent chest pain, dehydration, confusion) and if possible, until after consulting with your primary care provider
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow
- Wash your hands often
- Consider wearing a mask in crowded, poorly ventilated areas

Quote

“We encourage individuals to remain up to date on their flu and COVID-19 vaccinations. Many individuals throughout the community are showing symptoms. By getting vaccinated, you will be able to lower your risk of severe illness. There is still time to get your vaccinations, especially as upcoming holidays approach. Even if you are not considered to be at high risk for severe illness, getting vaccinated and utilizing public health recommendations will protect not only yourself, but those around you.” -Melissa Sixberry, Director of Disease Control, Yakima Health District

Additional Information

www.YakimaVaccines.org

www.YakimaTesting.org

[Yakima Health District: Flu and RSV Data](#)

[CDC: Influenza \(Flu\)](#)

[CDC: Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection \(RSV\)](#)

###