

Pickaway County Public Health

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Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Health Commissioner Urges Residents to Celebrate Safely

Pickaway County, much like all other counties in Ohio, is seeing a significant surge in cases of COVID-19. From December 12th-18th a total of 244 cases were reported, averaging almost 35 cases a day. Just a few weeks ago, the average was around 20 cases a day. While data shows that most cases occurring in Ohio are still caused by the Delta variant, CDC is closely tracking an increase in cases caused by the Omicron variant, which has already become the dominant variant in other countries. The Omicron variant emerged in South Africa in late November, and much is still unknown about how easily it spreads, the severity of illness it causes and how well the current vaccines and treatments will work against the new variant.

“Omicron is certainly a cause for concern as we look towards the next few months.” Says Adam Negley, Pickaway County Health Commissioner. “But the reality is that lots of people are still getting sick from Delta right now and our healthcare system continues to be stretched to its limit.”

Negley urges Pickaway County residents to get their COVID-19 booster shot at least two months after their initial J&J/Janssen vaccine or six months after completing their primary COVID-19 vaccination series of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna. “Boosters are now recommended for anyone over the age of 16 and are one of the best things you can do to protect yourself as the virus continues to change.” For those who have not yet been fully vaccinated, Negley urges quick action. “The CDC has said that current vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalization and death due to infection with the Omicron variant. Now is the time to get that protection.”

There are also other simple steps Pickaway County residents can continue to take as we face our second winter of surging cases. Masks offer protection against all variants and continue to be strongly recommended in public indoor

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settings. “You should wear a mask even if you have been vaccinated because we know that some vaccinated people can still spread the virus,” Negley advises.

COVID-19 tests can tell you if you are currently infected with COVID-19. There are several self-tests that can be used at home, are easy to use and produce rapid results. “Over the last several months the health department and other community partners have distributed thousands of rapid tests to community residents,” Negley said. “This service continues to be available so that anyone can know whether they are infected and take the appropriate steps to get treatment and prevent the spread to loved ones.” With the widespread availability of these tests at the health department, the Pickaway County Public Library and retail pharmacies, Negley urges residents not to go to the hospital just to be tested. “Showing up at the emergency room for a COVID test makes it that much harder for the staff to provide care to those who need it.”

Until we know more about the risk of Omicron, it is important to use all tools available to protect yourself and others during this holiday season and the coming months. PCPH offers weekly walk-in and appointment-based vaccination clinics for ages 5 and up. Please check our website at pchd.org or call 740-477-9667 for the most up-to-date schedule. Rapid test kits are distributed during regular business hours. If you are symptomatic, please call in advance to make arrangements to receive the test kits outdoors.

If you should have questions or concerns, please contact Pickaway County Public Health at 740-477-9667. We are open Monday – Friday 8:00am to 4:30pm.

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