



MONO COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Public Health

P.O. BOX 476, BRIDGEPORT, CA 93517 PHONE (760) 932-5580 • FAX (760) 932-5284
P.O. BOX 3329, MAMMOTH LAKES, CA 93546 PHONE (760) 924-1830 • FAX (760) 924-1831

MEDIA CONTACT:

Justin Caporusso/Caporusso Communications
justin@caporussocommunications.com
(916) 412-0571

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Confluence of Winter Viruses Concern Local Public Health Officials

Residents and Visitors Urged to take Precautions and Care

MONO COUNTY, Calif. (DECEMBER 06, 2022) – Mono County has recently seen a surge in both Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and Influenza (Flu) disease activity. In addition, Mono County Public Health is anticipating an additional increase in COVID-19 (Coronavirus) infection heading into the holiday season. As a result, Mono County Public Health is urging residents and visitors to take precautions, and seek appropriate care when ill.

“The winter viruses have arrived earlier than expected, and are trending to remain active longer than usual this winter season,” said Dr. Caryn Slack, MD, MPH, Mono County Health Officer. *“A triple threat of Flu, COVID-19, and RSV has descended upon Mono County, and simple proactive measures can help prevent and reduce local spread.”*

Craig Burrows, MD, Chief Medical Officer at Mammoth Hospital adds, *“Masking is a very simple intervention to prevent the spread of other viral illnesses besides COVID-19. If you are symptomatic with congestion, sneezing and coughing, and have to go out in public, please wear a mask to protect other people you come in contact with.”*

According to a news release from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), RSV, Flu, and COVID-19 are impacting Californians earlier than usual this year, and residents are encouraged to *“continue being vigilant in preventing the rapid spread of winter viruses.”* The release urges residents to *“protect themselves with vaccinations for Flu and COVID-19, to stay home when sick and to wear masks.”*

While the surge is evident based upon rising hospitalization numbers and increased volume of outpatient/Emergency Department visits for these illness’ symptoms, the actual levels of RSV, Flu, and COVID-19 disease in the community are difficult to quantify. Residents and visitors are asked to report their positive at-home COVID-19 tests via the CDPH portal: <https://primary.health/cdph/> to more accurately track local COVID-19 infection.

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine

Flu vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, and death. Similar to wearing a mask, the flu vaccine protects the vaccinated person and the people around them. Getting a flu vaccine can also save healthcare resources. Flu vaccination is part of a comprehensive public health strategy to reduce the burden of flu, and helps to preserve scarce healthcare resources for the care of patients with COVID-19.

Benefits of Flu Vaccination:

- Help keep you and your loved ones out of the hospital;
- Help preserve scarce medical resources to care for COVID-19 patients; and,
- Protect frontline healthcare workers who will be caring for people sick with respiratory illnesses this fall and winter.

COVID-19 Bivalent Vaccine Booster

In August 2022, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) amended the emergency use authorizations (EUAs) of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine and the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine to authorize bivalent formulations of the vaccines for use as a single booster dose at least two months following primary or booster vaccination. This updated booster provides better protection against COVID-19 caused by the Omicron Variant.

“The bivalent booster is recommended for individuals age 12 (Pfizer-BioNTech) and older who are at least two months out from completing their primary series, or receiving their original booster(s),” said Dr. Caryn Slack, MD, MPH, Mono County Health Officer. *“The development of this updated booster follows the influenza platform that has been in place for decades, essentially using a scientific formula to enhance the existing recipe and strengthen the vaccine’s protection against the COVID-19 strain as it has evolved. We are experiencing a 90 percent efficacy rate with the bivalent booster locally.”*

Bivalent COVID-19 Booster Eligibility:

- Individuals 18 years of age and older are eligible for a single booster dose of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine, Bivalent if it has been at least two months since they have completed primary vaccination or have received the most recent booster dose with any authorized or approved monovalent COVID-19 vaccine.
- Individuals 12 years of age and older are eligible for a single booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, Bivalent if it has been at least two months since they have completed primary vaccination or have received the most recent booster dose with any authorized or approved monovalent COVID-19 vaccine.

It remains safe to receive COVID-19 vaccines and flu shots at the same time.

For more information, questions, or concerns, please call Mono County Public Health at (760) 924-1830 or follow up with your pediatrician or medical provider.