



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 6, 2021

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Kalamazoo County Health Department Urges Residents to Receive their Vaccines During National Influenza Vaccination Week

Kalamazoo, MI – Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department is observing National Influenza Vaccination Week by urging residents to receive vaccines against highly contagious illnesses as soon as possible. Anyone can get the flu or COVID-19, including healthy children and adults. Getting the flu vaccine and an initial or booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and your family.

Flu Vaccine

Every person six months and older should get an annual flu vaccine, especially certain groups considered at the highest risk, like young children, pregnant women, adults who have chronic health conditions, or adults over the age of fifty. People with asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and many [other chronic health conditions](#) are at higher risk of developing serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization or even death. In addition, the flu vaccine reduces an individual's risk of being hospitalized due to influenza, freeing up hospital space, equipment, and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 Booster

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have recommended that all persons age 18 and older receive a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose to help protect individuals personally and help curb overall transmission in communities. If your original vaccine was an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna), you should wait six months after the initial series to get a booster. However, the wait is only two months if you received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. The booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine provides an additional layer of protection against COVID-19 and its variants currently circulating in Michigan and Kalamazoo County.

“There are many holiday traditions celebrated during the winter months. Before traveling or gathering with friends and family for those traditions, we urge residents to get vaccinated. It typically takes two weeks for your body to develop immunity after receiving any vaccine,” says Jim Rutherford, Health Officer of Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department. “Now is the time to make sure you have the best level of protection for yourself and others by getting your flu vaccine and COVID-19 initial dose or booster.”

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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Symptoms of influenza, which are similar to COVID-19 symptoms, include fever or feeling feverish/chilled, body aches, cough, sore throat, or fatigue. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent both viruses. If you receive a vaccination and still get the flu or COVID-19, the vaccine may make symptoms milder and the length of illness shorter. The vaccine will also prevent you from spreading the virus to others, including those at risk of more serious illness. Other preventive actions recommended to reduce the risk of COVID-19 also help reduce the risk of flu transmission. Those actions include:

- Wear a face mask while indoors in public.
- Get tested for COVID-19 when you have symptoms, 3-5 days after you are exposed to someone with COVID-19 and just prior to a gathering
- Socially distance while in gatherings.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean your hands often, with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

To date, 29% of eligible Kalamazoo County residents have received their flu vaccine and 67% of eligible Kalamazoo County residents have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

“If you show symptoms, do not make assumptions this year that it is allergies or a common cold. Stay home if you are symptomatic and see your doctor. With COVID-19 still spreading, getting the flu shot is more important than ever to stay healthy. The influenza vaccine is a safe and effective way to reduce illness, school or work absences, hospital stays, and death due to the flu. The more people are protected from the flu, the more hospital beds and testing supplies can be available during our current state of the COVID-19 pandemic. This further protects yourself, your family, and your community,” states Dr. William Nettleton, Medical Director for Kalamazoo County.

The flu vaccine, COVID-19 initial doses, and COVID-19 booster dose are available at Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department, located at 311 E. Alcott Street. Appointments are only required for the 5-11 year age group and can be scheduled by visiting www.kalcounty.com/covid19vaccine or calling the COVID-19 Call Center at 269-373-5200. All others aged 12 years or older may visit the health department Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for their flu and COVID-19 vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccine is free, and most insurance plans will cover the flu vaccine cost. No one will be turned away from the health department for an inability to pay for the flu vaccine.

There are many locations throughout the county where residents can receive a flu vaccine or COVID-19 initial or booster dose. To find a provider close to you, visit www.vaccines.gov.

To find current data trends on COVID-19, influenza, and other transmissible diseases in Kalamazoo County, visit www.kalcounty.com/hcs.

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