



KEARNY COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT
PREVENT PROMOTE PROTECT



October 26, 2021

To the Kearny County Community:

We are still in the midst of a significant surge of COVID cases in the county. Last week, the hospital had 9 patients with COVID-19 admitted to the hospital, which is the highest number that we have been at since the start of the pandemic. We have had a steady rate of COVID positive cases in the county as well, with a trend toward more children and young adults being affected.

Also of note, the CDC did approve booster doses for the vaccines. We have had many questions about this already this week, so we wanted to share the basic information:

1. For individuals who have completed the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine series, the following groups are eligible for a booster shot at 6 months or more after their initial series:
 - a. Age 65+.
 - b. Age 18+ who live in long-term care settings or who have underlying medical conditions (ex: cancer, chronic kidney or liver disease, chronic lung disease, dementia, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, pregnancy, those who have a weakened immune system).
 - c. Age 18+ who work or live in high-risk settings (ex: healthcare workers, education staff, food / agriculture workers, grocery store workers).
2. For individuals who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, a booster shot is recommended for all persons age 18+ and who were vaccinated two or more months ago.
3. Individuals who are eligible for a booster may choose which vaccine they receive as a booster. In other words, you can “mix and match” manufacturers for the booster.

This brings up 2 questions:

First, what does all of this mean? Many of our county population who were immunized early 2021 are now eligible for a booster. Our recommendation is that if you received the Moderna or Pfizer primary series, stay with the same manufacturer for the booster, or if that is not available, stay with the mRNA vaccines (Moderna or Pfizer). If you received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, our recommendation is that you receive Pfizer or Moderna for your booster shot.

Second, why should I get a booster? The primary vaccine series is still very effective in cutting down risk of severe COVID-19 illness (i.e. hospitalization and death). However, the risk of breakthrough mild infection has gradually been increasing. The booster helps to reduce the risk of the breakthrough COVID infections in those who are vaccinated, and also is another way that we can mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our community. In other words, the booster, while not as imperative as the primary series, is still important in keeping individuals healthy and in mitigating spread of COVID-19 in our community and region.

Booster shots will be available in multiple locations in the county. Pfizer and Moderna boosters will be available at the Family Health Center, Moderna boosters will be available at the Kearny County Health Department, and Johnson & Johnson boosters will be available at Lakin Drug. Please call any of these places to schedule your primary vaccine series or your booster injection and reach out to the Family Health Center or Health Department as well if you have further questions. COVID-19 continues to affect our community on a daily basis, let's continue to work towards being united in our approach to keep our community safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Drew Miller, MD, FAAFP