



KEARNY COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT
PREVENT PROMOTE PROTECT



November 30, 2021

To the Kearny County Community:

I wanted to provide an update with regards to the COVID-19 status in our community. We are still in the midst of a relatively sustained surge of COVID-19 cases that shows no signs of slowing at this time. Our county had 14 new positive cases alone on Monday of this week, which is the highest single day that we have had in at least the last 6 months. Unfortunately, we have also had 5 COVID-related deaths in the county in the last 6 weeks. This is alarming, as previously we only had 9 total COVID-related deaths in the county since the start of the pandemic. We continue to admit moderate to severely ill individuals with COVID-19, and these hospital stays are many times long and drawn out.

There is good news as well. There are things we can do as a county to mitigate the spread. Please stay home and get tested if you or your family members are not feeling well. Wear a mask in appropriate situations. Most importantly, please get vaccinated! Many have asked about updated recommendations regarding the COVID-19 vaccine in children and regarding boosters, so here are our recommendations:

1. Children ages 5 and up are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. Pfizer is the only one approved for ages 5-17 and is available at the Family Health Center. The recommended dose is lower for ages 5-11, but it is still a 2 shot regimen, separated by 3 weeks. The efficacy and safety data on the vaccine in this age range is excellent, so please call the clinic to get this scheduled for your children.
2. Boosters are strongly recommended for everyone ages 18 and up who have completed their primary COVID-19 vaccine series. If the primary series was Johnson and Johnson, then the booster is recommended 2 months after the initial injection. If the primary series was Pfizer or Moderna, then the booster is recommended 6 months after completing the second injection. The primary series is still the most important, but data regarding the importance of the booster continues to grow. The primary series is effective, but the booster is important for sustained immunity from breakthrough COVID infections.
3. If you have not received your primary series, please call the clinic, health department, or Lakin Drug to get this scheduled.

There is plenty of political controversy regarding COVID-19 vaccination right now, and also an abundant amount of misinformation regarding the vaccines. However, if we can filter all of that out and look at this from an evidence-based standpoint, the verdict is clear: the vaccine is safe, effective, and important. It is our single greatest tool to help us mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and combat this pandemic.

Our local and regional healthcare systems are showing signs of significant strain. Staff are leaving due to frustration, burnout, and fatigue. We cannot keep the current pace up indefinitely. Please do what you can to help our healthcare team. 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