Media Release

COVID-19 Bivalent Booster and the Flu Vaccine Important This Fall

Yakima, WA- The Yakima Health District (YHD) urges community members to get their flu and bivalent COVID-19 vaccines this fall before the holidays. Flu activity in recent years has been low due to community-wide preventative measures and COVID-19 precautions that have been in place.

In Yakima County, cases of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and flu were reported in mid-September. This is earlier than the normal start of the flu season, which usually begins in October. In RSV tests conducted at Yakima County's hospitals, the weekly positivity percentage ranged between 1.7% to 15.4%. In the flu tests conducted, the weekly positivity percentage ranged between 1.4% to 3.9%. Currently, in Washington State, flu activity is considered to be at a minimal level, according to the CDC, however, influenza activity continues to increase in various parts of the nation. An annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect against the flu. Vaccination helps prevent infection and can also prevent serious outcomes in people who get vaccinated but still get sick with the flu.

It is possible for individuals to be infected with influenza and COVID-19 at the same time, which is why YHD urges the community to get vaccinated against both the flu and COVID-19 and prevent our healthcare system from being overwhelmed.

Flu Vaccine
Everyone six months of age and older are recommended to get an annual flu vaccine. Young children, pregnant women, those with underlying health conditions, and people aged 65 and older are at high risk for flu-related complications. The flu is a highly contagious disease that can cause mild to severe illness, and lead to hospitalization and death- even in healthy, young people.

Getting a flu vaccine reduces individual's risk of getting the flu, and it can be safely given at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 Bivalent Booster

The COVID-19 bivalent booster is available to anyone 5 years and older. It contains an updated bivalent formula that boosts immunity against the original coronavirus strain and protects against the newer Omicron variants, such as BA.4 and BA.5, that account for most of the current cases.

Individuals who are eligible can receive either the Pfizer or Moderna bivalent COVID-19 booster, regardless of the vaccine they received as their primary series or most recent dose. Individuals who received the original booster dose, also known as monovalent, are eligible to receive the bivalent booster dose. Pfizer's bivalent COVID-19 booster is available to those 5 years and older, and Moderna's bivalent COVID-19 booster is available for those 6 years and older. It is recommended that individuals stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccinations and receive the bivalent booster dose at least 2 months after their primary series or since their last booster dose.

The COVID-19 bivalent booster recommendations are as follows:

	Who should get a booster	When to get a booster	Which booster to get
If you got... **Pfizer-BioNTech**	People 5 years and older	At least 2 months after completing their last dose (primary series or monovalent booster)	**People 5 years old** should only receive an updated bivalent Pfizer booster / **People 6 years and older** should receive an updated bivalent Pfizer or Moderna booster
If you got... **Moderna**	People 5 years and older	At least 2 months after completing their last dose (primary series or monovalent booster)	**People 5 years old** should only receive an updated bivalent Pfizer booster / **People 6 years and older** should receive an updated bivalent Pfizer or Moderna booster
If you got... **Novavax**	People 12 years and older	At least 2 months after completing their primary series	**People 12 years and older** should receive an updated bivalent Pfizer or Moderna booster
If you got... **Johnson & Johnson**	People 18 years and older	At least 2 months after completing their last dose (primary series or monovalent booster)	**People 18 years and older** should receive an updated bivalent Pfizer or Moderna booster

If you are moderately or severely immunocompromised guidelines will vary.

Individuals who were recently infected with COVID-19 should still get vaccinated against COVID-19. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine after recovering from a COVID-19 infection provides added protection against COVID-19. Individuals may consider delaying getting a COVID-19 vaccine for three months from when their symptoms started, or if they had no symptoms, when they received a positive test.

Upcoming Community COVID-19 and Flu Vaccine Clinic

Individuals can find a list of upcoming community COVID-19 vaccine clinics and a list of clinics and pharmacies offering COVID-19 vaccines and flu vaccines at www.YakimaVaccines.org.

Date	Time	Location
November 14, 2022	4:30pm-6:30pm	**Franklin Middle School** 410 S 19th Ave Yakima, WA 98902

Quote

"With the holidays approaching, families will be getting together to celebrate. Now is the perfect time to get your COVID-19 bivalent booster. We encourage all people to remain up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccinations and also get the flu vaccine. Having received both vaccines will reduce the risk of becoming infected and seriously ill from either virus and make holiday gatherings safer." -Dr. Neil Barg, Health Officer, Yakima Health District

Additional Information

www.YakimaVaccines.org

Yakima Health District: RSV & Flu Stats

COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Doses Reference Guide for All Ages

CDC: Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination

CDC: Who Needs a Flu Vaccine

CDC: Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report

WA DOH: Is it COVID-19 or is it the Flu?

WA DOH: Are you at risk for flu?

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