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PERSONAL HEALTH DIVISION

For Immediate Release

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Best holiday present: Flu and COVID vaccines to protect loved ones

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health 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 50. 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 across the world, the United States and in Michigan.

“During this holiday season as you are gathering with family and friends, now is the time to make sure you have the best level of protection for yourself and others and get your flu vaccine and COVID-19 initial dose or booster,” said Dr. Josh Meyerson, Medical Director with the health department. It takes two weeks after a second dose of Pfizer or Moderna or after the first and only dose of J&J to be considered fully vaccinated – just in time for the holidays.

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 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, 32.1% of eligible residents in the two-county jurisdiction of the health department have received their flu vaccine and 76.1% of eligible residents (5 years and older) have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Additional flu vaccination data can be found by visiting the [Michigan Flu Vaccination Dashboard](#).

Flu and COVID-19 vaccinations – including booster shots – are widely available at pharmacies, health care providers, and health department clinics. For a list of vaccine providers and locations in Benzie and Leelanau counties, click [here](#).

Vaccination continues to be our most powerful tool. The health department offers convenient COVID-19 vaccination clinics for all area residents and visitors 12 and older. Parent consent is required for minors. Anyone may call the Michigan COVID-19 hotline at 888-535-6136 if they have questions or are not able to find a time or date that works for them and/or their child. Clinics offer clients a choice of Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J's Janssen unless otherwise noted. Upcoming clinics for appointments only include:

Tuesday, December 14th – THERE WILL BE NO COMMUNITY COVID-19 VACCINATION CLINIC AS THE LOCATION IS NOT AVAILABLE.

- VFW Post 7731, 7475 E Duck Lake Rd, Lake Leelanau, MI 49653
- Time: No Clinic on the 14th
- Vaccine: Moderna, Janssen, and Pfizer (open to 12 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
- To schedule an appointment for next year: [Click Here](#)

Wednesday, December 15th – Community COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic

- Crystal Cafe, 1681 Benzie Hwy, Benzonia, MI 49616
- Time: 12:00- 5:00pm
- Vaccine: Moderna, Janssen, and Pfizer (open to 12 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
- To schedule an appointment: [Click here](#)
- Starting January 5th, 2022, BLDHD's Community COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic in Benzie County will be held at Platte River Association in Honor, MI. All planned COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic in December will be held at Crystal Café.

COVID-19 Testing

The health department is offering free COVID-19 testing with the support of HONU lab. The test is free, and no doctor's order is required. Pre-registration is not required, but it is recommended to reduce time spent at the testing clinic, and walk-ins are welcome. Testing is available:

- No testing clinics on Monday and Thursday next week at the VFW Post 7731.
- On Tuesday and Friday from 10 am – 3pm at the Crystal Café in Benzonia. To register visit: <https://honumg.info/CrystalCafe>

No testing clinics in Leelanau County on Monday, December 13th and Thursday, December 16th.

COVID-19 Case Counts

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is reporting the following case information:

- On Tuesday, December 7, 50 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Benzie (20) and Leelanau (30).
- On Wednesday, December 8, 29 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Benzie (13) and Leelanau (16).
- Today, December 9, 31 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Benzie (15) and Leelanau (16), and one new COVID-19 associated death in Leelanau County.

As of 4:00 p.m. today, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 2,215, Leelanau– 2,340
- Active COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 399, Leelanau– 450
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 1,776, Leelanau– 1,859
- Confirmed COVID-19 deaths in the following counties: Benzie – 40, Leelanau– 31
- Hospitalized: 268 total; 15 currently

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