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CONTACT:

Michael.claffey@illinois.gov

IDPH Urges Public to Protect Loved Ones from COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Viruses During Thanksgiving Holiday

Illinoisans urged to Get Fully Vaccinated for COVID-19 & Flu Before the Holidays; If you are Sick, Stay Home; Illinois Reports 13,659 New Cases of COVID-19 Since November 11

CHICAGO – With COVID-19 cases and other respiratory viruses circulating in many areas of the state, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is urging Illinoisans to take precautions and celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday safely without spreading the virus to family and friends. In addition to being fully vaccinated and boosted for COVID-19 and the flu, IDPH encourages the public to get tested before attending holiday gatherings, especially if you'll be visiting someone at high risk for severe COVID-19; to stay home if you are sick; and practice good hand hygiene. In addition, holiday hosts are urged to ensure gatherings are well-ventilated.

These safety reminders come as the CDC is reporting 21 Illinois counties at an elevated [Community Level for COVID-19](#). IDPH is reporting 13,659 new confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Illinois, and 48 deaths since November 11.

“As we prepare to celebrate all that we are thankful for this season, I want to encourage all Illinoisans to take the necessary precautions to protect themselves and their loved ones,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “With respiratory illnesses such as RSV, the flu, and COVID-19 leading to increased illness and hospitalizations, I strongly recommend using all available strategies to stay healthy and safe. These strategies include COVID-19 testing, especially if visiting someone at risk for severe disease, enhanced ventilation, good hand hygiene, staying home if sick, and getting up to date with both the COVID-19 bivalent booster and the flu shot. All of us at IDPH wish Illinois residents a very happy and healthy Thanksgiving.”

IDPH is helping Illinoisans prepare for a potential fall and winter surge of COVID-19 cases by offering 1 million free COVID-19 rapid antigen tests to residents in economically disadvantaged zip codes through a partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation's public charity, RF Catalytic Capital and its Project ACT (Access COVID Tests) program.

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Through Project ACT, IDPH will be distributing one million at-home antigen tests to 200,000 Illinois families in zip codes outside the City of Chicago that are rated high on a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI). Households can find out if they are in an eligible zip code and request one package of five tests on a first-come-first-serve basis at the [Project ACT website](#). The tests will be delivered to the home address.

Free or low cost COVID-19 testing locations are also available throughout the state, including in Chicago, and can be found on the IDPH website's [testing locator page](#).

IDPH reported that over the last week, large numbers of Illinoisans are continuing to receive the new bivalent boosters, with an average of almost 20,000 doses of the updated vaccines administered across the state each day.

The CDC authorized two new bivalent booster vaccines on September 1 that include an mRNA component of the original strain to provide an immune response that is broadly protective against COVID-19 and an added mRNA component in common between the omicron variant BA.4 and BA.5 lineages to provide better protection against COVID-19 caused by the omicron variant.

Initially, the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine, Bivalent, was authorized for use as a single booster dose in individuals 18 years of age and older and the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, Bivalent, was authorized for use as a single booster dose in individuals 12 years of age and older. On October 12, the CDC authorized the updated COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech for children ages 5 through 11 years, and from Moderna for children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 years.

The updated boosters are available at pharmacies, hospitals, and other healthcare providers. The best way to locate a vaccine provider near you is to visit www.vaccines.gov and search for bivalent booster availability.

Currently, IDPH is reporting a total of 3,850,508 cases, including 35,389 deaths, in 102 counties in Illinois since the beginning of the pandemic.

As of last night, 1,070 individuals in Illinois were reported to be in the hospital with COVID-19. Of those, 116 patients were in the ICU and 37 patients with COVID-19 were on ventilators. The preliminary seven-day statewide case rate is 107 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 Illinoisans.

In counties at the **Medium Community Level**, persons who are elderly or immunocompromised (at risk of severe outcomes) are advised to wear a mask in indoor public places. They should also get up to date on COVID-19 vaccines or get their bivalent booster, if eligible.

IDPH has been supporting pharmacies and healthcare providers in efforts to increase their inventories of the various FDA-authorized treatments. There are [over 1,200 treatment locations](#) in Illinois - including all the major retail pharmacies. More than 96.7% of the state's population is within a 10-mile radius of one of these locations.

A total of 25,182,372 vaccines have been administered in Illinois. The seven-day rolling average of vaccines administered daily is 22,277 doses, including the bivalent booster and first doses. Since November 11, 155,937 vaccine doses were reported administered in Illinois. More than 1.7



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million people in Illinois have received the new bivalent booster dose since it was authorized. Of Illinois' total population, more than 78% have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, more than 70% have completed their primary series of COVID-19 vaccines, and of the eligible population, more than 14% have received the bivalent booster dose, according to [data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Data indicates that the risk of hospitalization and severe outcomes from COVID-19 is much higher for unvaccinated people than for those who are up to date on their vaccinations. All data are provisional and are subject to change. Additional information and COVID-19 data can be found at <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19.html>.

Vaccination is the key to ending this pandemic. To find a COVID-19 vaccination location near you, go to www.vaccines.gov. The federal government has established a new website that provides an all-purpose toolkit with information on how to obtain masks, treatment, vaccines and testing resources for all areas of the country at: <https://www.covid.gov/>.

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