

## **News Release**

### **For Immediate Release**

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### **Time for Flu Shots and COVID-19 Shots**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages residents to get their flu shots and COVID-19 shot updates to protect against respiratory illnesses this winter. SWNPHD has seen an increase of COVID-19 cases over the past few weeks, following the late summer wave of infections seen across most of the country.

Influenza (flu) and COVID-19 are caused by viruses that are always changing. This means that as our immune systems fight off one infection, the viruses adapt to avoid being targeted again. When large numbers of people are infected at the same time as happens with flu and COVID, the viruses change more quickly. This is why researchers work to provide updated shots each year, to better protect against the more recent strains of flu and COVID-19 that are going around.

Influenza (flu) is a potentially fatal, contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. Flu vaccines make it less likely that you will get the flu; if you do get the flu, it keeps your symptoms from becoming serious, lowering the risk of needing medical care or hospitalization.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people infected with this virus experience mild illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some people become seriously ill and need medical attention. The COVID vaccines really reduce the risk of developing severe complications, hospitalization, long COVID symptoms, or death.

**Everyone ages 6 months and older are recommended to get the updated flu shots and COVID shots.** Flu shots are available at local clinics, and COVID shots are at pharmacies and the SWNPHD offices in McCook and Ogallala. For those who have had a COVID shot over the summer, they will need to wait two months after their last dose before getting the 2024-2025 update.

According to the CDC, it is safe and acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccine and flu vaccine during the same appointment. These are separate shots and are not combined into one shot. Check with your healthcare provider if you have questions about getting multiple vaccinations at one time.

For more information, call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok or view the website at [swhealth.ne.gov](http://swhealth.ne.gov) which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health.

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