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Health reminders for year-end holidays

Erie, PA — The Erie County Department of Health reminds Erie County residents about practical health precautions this winter season and as we all begin to prepare for the year-end holidays. Respiratory illnesses or illnesses that can cause breathing problems such as **COVID-19**, **influenza** or **the flu** and **respiratory syncytial virus** (**RSV**) spread when infected persons cough or sneeze into the air or onto objects like doorknobs and light switches.

Preventing the spread of these illnesses can allow students to go to school without interruption, which is better for their development, and allow adults to continue working. It can also help prevent overcrowding hospitals.

The following recommendations can help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses:
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing. Wash or sanitize hands. Clean frequently touched surfaces like doorknobs and mobile devices. Stay home if not feeling well. Ventilate homes and work spaces when possible.
- Get all recommended COVID-19 vaccine and booster doses, for 6 months and older, including those who are pregnant and plan on becoming pregnant.
- Get a flu vaccine every year, for ages 6 and older.
- Anyone may choose to mask at any time, regardless of vaccination status.
- If you are (or live, work or have contact with someone who is) at high risk for severe illness or have a weak immune system, consider masking indoors.
- Wear a mask if travelling by plane, train, bus or other forms of public transportation.
- Wear a mask if you have symptoms, positive test results, or have been exposed to COVID-19.

The community is welcome to contact the Erie County Department of Health for guidance on COVID-19. For details on how to stay up to date on vaccines and boosters, how to use home test kits, isolation guidelines, preventing spread of COVID-19 in business establishments and events, and other information, contact covidresponse@eriecountypa.gov or 814-451-6700 or fill out the online Community Form at Eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/.

Cases and data
From Dec. 5 to Dec. 18,
- There were **534** COVID-19 cases reported, with a daily average of **38** cases. New case numbers reflect only reported cases and is not a definitive indicator of actual number of cases in Erie County.
- There were **3** deaths reported, with dates of death from **Nov. 28, 2022** to **Dec. 3, 2022**, increasing the total death count in 2022 to **185**.

There were **111** vaccination and booster doses administered. There were also **3,133** bivalent booster doses administered. This increases the total number of persons vaccinated to **186,453** with the following breakdown:

	Number of persons	**Of total population**
Partially vaccinated	23,867	8.8%
Fully vaccinated	162,586	60.2%
Received first booster	83,720	31.0%
Received second booster	20,362	7.5%
Received bivalent booster	39,693	13.6%

Among the total reported deaths in 2022 in Erie County, the breakdown by vaccination status and age range is as follows:

Vaccination status among reported 2022 Deaths	Ages 0-49	Ages 50-64	Ages 65 & older	Sub-total	Percentage breakdown
Partially vaccinated and Not vaccinated	8	17	58	8.	45%
Fully vaccinated - not up to date with primary series or booster	0	4	52	56	30%
Fully vaccinated – up to date with primary series	2	2	5	9	5%
Fully vaccinated – up to date with booster (including bivalent booster)	0	5	32	37	20%
Total		185		185	100%

Related reference at https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#rates-by-vaccine-status

Information on cases and deaths in Erie County and other data such as reports on vaccination demographics can be found at https://eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/positive-cases-in-erie-county/. Latest recommendations and related data is also available at websites of:
- Pennsylvania Department of Health health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Cases.aspx
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view

Benefit of vaccination and boosters
The benefit of staying up to date with vaccination and boosters, even for those who have had COVID-19, is that it helps the body prevent severe illness and lessens the likelihood of needing hospitalization. Boosters extend the effectiveness of vaccines against COVID-19 and help protect against variants.

Free vaccines and boosters are available for residents of Erie County. *For list of local vaccination sites, visit eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine or text ZIP Code to 438829, visit vaccines.gov or call 1-800-232-0233.*

Importance of testing
Community members, vaccinated or unvaccinated, are recommended to get tested for COVID-19 if they have been exposed to anyone who has COVID-19 or if they have symptoms such as sore throat, coughing, upper respiratory congestion, difficulty breathing, fever or chills, muscle or body aches, vomiting or diarrhea, or loss of taste or smell. Testing results can help determine appropriate care and treatment if needed.

For list of local sites offering free testing, visit eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/covid-19-testing-information.

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