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For immediate release

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Wastewater surveillance shows uptick of COVID virus in the Panhandle, children age 5-11 can now get a COVID booster

Wastewater surveillance at the Scottsbluff collection site shows an uptick of COVID virus in the area. Wastewater surveillance can provide an early warning of COVID's spread in communities.

People infected with COVID can shed the virus in their feces, even if they don't have symptoms. The virus can then be detected in wastewater, enabling wastewater surveillance to capture presence of COVID shed by people with and without symptoms. This allows wastewater surveillance to serve as an early warning that COVID is spreading in a community and communities can act quickly to prevent the spread of COVID. Now is a good time to get up-to-date on your COVID vaccination.

The Nebraska Wastewater Surveillance System is a collaboration between wastewater treatment facilities, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health and Nebraska DHHS. There are 15 sampling locations throughout Nebraska with Scottsbluff and Chadron as sites in the Panhandle. For more information go to <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/COVID-19-Genomics-and-Wastewater-Surveillance.aspx>

As of May 19, 2022, children age 5-11 can get a booster dose 5 months after their initial Pfizer-BioNTech vaccination series. Since the pandemic began, more than 4.8 million children ages 5 through 11 have been diagnosed with COVID, 15,000 have been hospitalized and, tragically, over 180 have died. As cases increase across the country, a booster dose will safely help restore and enhance protection against severe disease.

COVID vaccine is widely available across the Panhandle for individuals age 5 and over, there are no out-of-pocket expenses. COVID vaccine for children six months to four years of age will be available in the coming weeks.

Panhandle Vaccine Locations

- **Box Butte/Grant:** <https://tinyurl.com/25mwaapu> | [safeway.com](https://www.safeway.com)
 - Walk-ins welcome
 - Dave's Pharmacy Hemingford & Alliance, Monday-Friday, 8 AM - 5:30 PM

- Alliance Community Pharmacy, Monday-Friday, 7:30 AM - 6 PM
- **Cheyenne/Deuel:** <https://tinyurl.com/5b5uac8p> | walmart.com | safeway.com
 - Walk-ins welcome
- **Dawes/Sioux:** <https://tinyurl.com/x5d5nnbn> | walmart.com | safeway.com
 - Walk-ins welcome
 - Western Community Health Resources, Monday-Friday, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM, Call 308-432-8979 to schedule an appointment outside these hours.
- **Garden:** To schedule an appointment, call (308) 772-3283.
 - Regional West Garden County Clinic, Monday-Friday, 8 AM - 5 PM
- **Kimball:** <https://tinyurl.com/d2u8txrs>
 - Walk-ins welcome Kimball Health Services, Monday-Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM
- **Morrill:** Call to schedule an appointment
 - Walk-ins welcome
 - Morrill County Hospital Clinic (Bridgeport), Thursdays, 8 AM - 4:30 PM call 308-262-1755
 - Chimney Rock Medical Center (Bayard), Tuesdays, 8 AM - 4:30 PM call 308-586-1717
- **Sheridan:** <https://tinyurl.com/cvrmkv38>
 - Walk-ins welcome
 - Gordon Rural Health Clinic, Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM and 1 PM - 4 PM
- **Scotts Bluff/Banner:** <https://tinyurl.com/hkw7wk2p> | walmart.com | safeway.com | walgreens.com
 - Walk-ins welcome
 - Gering CAPWN Health Center, Monday-Friday, 9 AM-12 PM & 1 PM-4 PM
 - Scotts Bluff County Immunization Clinic, 313 W 38th St, Monday-Friday, 9:30 AM-5:30 PM
 - Guadalupe Center 2nd Saturday of each month 8 AM-10 AM

If you are homebound or have a condition that makes it hard for you to access a COVID vaccine, Call Vianey Zitterkopf, RN at 308-430-8390 or Janet Felix, LPN at 308-672-4653. If you have lost your COVID vaccine card, go to <https://tinyurl.com/2zh7uhhu>.

COVID Testing Access

Free COVID test kits are available at community locations throughout the Panhandle. Find a location near you at <https://tinyurl.com/4fkydcfe>.

Residents can have as many as their family needs with a limit of six at one time at no charge. These are important to have on-hand so if you or a family member feels a minor COVID-like symptom, you can quickly test to make a decision about how to keep yourself and others that may be around you healthy and safe.

Once picked up, individuals can perform the test on their own or be helped through a video call. If done through the video call, you will receive a certified lab report that can be used for travel, medical procedures, and other documentation needs.

In addition to the local test kits available, Panhandle residents can also order four, free at-home COVID tests at COVIDtests.gov or by calling 1-800-232-0233. Orders will usually ship in 7-12 days. Current COVID testing access can also be found at <http://pphd.org/COVID-19.html>.

Panhandle COVID Dashboard Update

The Panhandle COVID dashboard provides region-wide data on COVID trends around the area and is available at www.pphd.org. The state COVID dashboard is available at <https://tinyurl.com/ufj9fcuf>. For the most up to date information from the CDC, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Panhandle Public Health District, Region 21, 22, and 23 Emergency Management, and Scotts Bluff County Health Department are working as a unified command on this evolving situation. Essential updates will be regularly communicated to the public and community partners.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. Visit our website www.pphd.org.