Media Information:

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127 COVID-19 patients in Billings hospitals, 3 deaths

Billings, MT – Three more Yellowstone County residents have passed away due to COVID-19 related illness, RiverStone Health reported Wednesday, raising the pandemic toll to 309 lives lost in our county.

The latest Yellowstone County COVID-19 victims are:
- A man in his 60s who passed on Tuesday, Sept. 14, at a Billings hospital. He was unvaccinated, and had underlying health conditions.
- A man in his 60s who died on Monday, Sept. 13, at a Billings hospital. He had been fully vaccinated and had underlying medical conditions.
- A woman in her 70s who died at home on Sept. 8. She was unvaccinated and had underlying health conditions. This COVID-19 related fatality was identified through death certificate review at the Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder's Office.

To protect personal privacy, RiverStone Health doesn't release specific information on an individual's underlying medical conditions. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, conditions with published scientific evidence that they have "a significant association with risk of severe COVID-19 illness," include: cancer, cerebrovascular disease (in blood vessels of the brain), chronic kidney disease, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), diabetes mellitus, type 1 and type 2; heart conditions (such as heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies), obesity, pregnancy and recent pregnancy, smoking (current and former).

There is evidence that numerous other medical conditions may increase the risk of severe illness from COVID-19. To learn more, visit cdc.gov and search for "coronavirus underlying conditions."

"As we mourn the untimely passing of three more Yellowstone County neighbors, Billings hospitals are struggling to meet the rapidly growing demands for care of severely ill COVID-19 patients along with all their other patients," said John Felton, Yellowstone County health officer and RiverStone Health CEO and president.

"This crisis affects our entire regional health system. Five of seven Yellowstone County dashboard indicators are now red, signifying critical concern for healthcare system capacity, public health capacity, a high rate of positive COVID-19 tests in Yellowstone County, a high level of active cases in the county and in the region."

On Wednesday, Billings Clinic and St. Vincent Healthcare had 127 inpatients with COVID-19 illness. Thirty-seven of them were in ICU and 29 were on ventilators. Among the 127 COVID-19 patients, 101 weren't vaccinated.

"Vaccination remains our fastest, most effective defense against COVID-19," Felton said.

RiverStone Health is offering free first and second doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to everyone age 12 and older. The two-dose Moderna vaccine is available to people age 18 and older as is the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Third doses will be given only to immune-compromised people and only at walk-in clinics. RiverStone Health has scheduled a free, walk-in clinic for **Thursday, Sept. 23, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.,** at 123 S. 27th St., in the four-story building.

To make appointments for first and second vaccine doses with the RiverStone Health Immunization Clinic, call **247-3382**. More vaccination information is posted at covid.riverstonehealth.org.

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