



## Media Information:

**For immediate release:**

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### **COVID-19 claims four more Yellowstone County lives**

**Billings, MT** – Four Yellowstone County residents died on Wednesday of COVID-19 related illness, raising the county’s pandemic death toll to 486 lives lost since spring 2020.

None of the four latest pandemic victims were vaccinated. Each of them died in Billings hospitals and all had underlying medical conditions that put them at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness. The deceased include:

- A woman in her 40s.
- Three men in their 60s.

Statewide, 2,935 Montanans have died of illness related to the pandemic virus, according to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

On Thursday, Billings hospitals had 55 COVID-19 inpatients, including 39 who weren’t vaccinated and 16 who were vaccinated. Among the hospitalized COVID-19 patients, seven were in ICU and seven were on ventilators. Statewide, 178 Montanans were hospitalized Thursday with COVID-19 illness, according to DPHHS. Since the pandemic disease arrived in Montana in March 2020, a total of 10,602 Montanans have been hospitalized with COVID-19 related illness, DPHHS reports.

So far this week, more than 1,500 Yellowstone County residents have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. In the first 13 days of January, our county has had nearly 2,300 residents test positive for COVID-19. These case numbers are more current than the statistics on the state’s online map today. By contrast, in the entire month of December, our county had only 956 new cases of COVID-19 infection.

Vaccination remains the safest, most effective way to reduce risk of COVID-19 illness, hospitalization and death. COVID-19 vaccines are available at local medical clinics and pharmacies. RiverStone Health will offer these free, walk-in community COVID-19 vaccination clinics for people age five and older:

- Thursday, Jan. 20, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Shrine Auditorium, 1125 Broadwater Ave.

- Thursday, Jan. 27, 10 a.m. – noon at Petro Theater, Montana State University Billings, 1500 University Dr.
- Thursday, Jan. 27, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. at City College Tech Building, 3803 Central Ave.
- Thursday, Feb. 10, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Shrine Auditorium, 1125 Broadwater Ave.

Free COVID-19 vaccinations also can be scheduled by appointment by calling the RiverStone Health Immunization Clinic at 406.247.3382.

Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are available at RiverStone Health clinics. People can receive first, second and booster doses as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. People who previously had one or two doses should bring their vaccination card. Parents must sign consent forms for children under 18. Masks are required at the vaccination clinic.

A list of Yellowstone County sites offering COVID-19 tests, along with cost and contact information is posted at [covid.riverstonehealth.org](https://covid.riverstonehealth.org). Click on the blue bar that says “I need a COVID-19 test”.

Along with being vaccinated, wearing a well-fitting mask, maintaining distance from others, frequent handwashing and staying home when you are feeling ill will help lessen the spread of the highly infectious Omicron variant.

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