



Media Information:

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Two years of pandemic, four more resident deaths in Yellowstone County

Billings, MT – Two years ago yesterday, March 13, 2020, Yellowstone County recorded its first case of COVID-19. Since then, the highly transmissible virus has infected thousands of Yellowstone County people and has affected virtually every one of us. Health services, schools, businesses, churches, clubs, sports – virtually every aspect of our community – made difficult changes because of the pandemic virus.

In 2020, there were 205 COVID-19 related deaths among Yellowstone County residents. In 2021, the county lost even more lives to the pandemic: 275. Additional statistics on Yellowstone County's COVID-19 deaths are posted in charts at covid.riverstonehealth.org.

The hopeful news on this second COVID-19 anniversary is that cases and hospitalization numbers have plummeted after surging with the Omicron variant in January and early February. Fewer deaths have occurred in recent weeks. The county's pandemic death toll now stands at 545 people, including four deaths reported today.

All four of the Yellowstone County residents whose deaths are reported today had underlying medical conditions that put them at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness. The deaths listed below that didn't occur in a hospital were identified through death certificates filed with the Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder's Office.

The latest Yellowstone County pandemic victims are:

- A man in his 60s who passed away on March 9 at a Billings hospital. He was not vaccinated.
- A woman in her 90s who passed away on March 1 at her home. She was not vaccinated.
- A man in his 80s who passed away on Jan. 28 at an elder care facility. He was up to date on vaccination.
- A woman in her 70s who passed away on Jan. 23 at an elder care facility. Her vaccination status was unknown.

For the week ending on Saturday, March 12, the two Billings hospitals together had an average of 19 COVID-19 inpatients daily. That downward trend continued Monday with the hospitals reporting 12

COVID-19 inpatients. That included eight patients who were not vaccinated, two who were fully vaccinated and two who were up to date.

“Fully vaccinated” means a person has received the primary series of COVID-19 vaccines: one dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine or two doses of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. “Up to date” means a person has received all recommended COVID-19 vaccines, including booster dose(s) when eligible.

In the year since safe, effective COVID-19 vaccinations became widely available, 77% of Montanans whose deaths were related to the pandemic virus weren’t vaccinated, according to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

For a vaccination appointment at RiverStone Health, call the Immunization Clinic at 406.247.3382 or the primary care Clinic at 406.247.3350. The next free, community walk-in COVID-19 vaccination clinic will be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on March 31 at the Shrine Auditorium, 1125 Broadwater Ave.

If your business or organization is in need of a quantity of free at-home COVID-19 test kits, call RiverStone Health at 406.651.6410 with your request.

Free at-home COVID-19 tests are available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays in the lobby of the Lil Anderson Center, the four-story building on the RiverStone Health Campus, 123 S. 27th St. Free at-home COVID-19 tests also may be picked up at any RiverStone Health Clinic in Billings, Bridger, Joliet or Worden.

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