



## Media Information:

**For immediate release:**

April 4, 2022

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### **First week in 2022 with no Yellowstone County COVID-19 deaths reported**

**Billings, MT** – For the first time since May 2021, Yellowstone County has had an entire week with no residents dying of COVID-19 illness. Our pandemic death toll stands at 550 residents lost to the virus, the same number reported on March 28. Sixty-three of those deaths occurred in 2022.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 virus remains in our community. A small number of positive tests continues to be reported and, as of Monday, four Yellowstone County people were hospitalized with COVID-19 illness. None of them was in intensive care.

Altogether in the week ending on April 2, a daily average of six people (including Yellowstone County residents and others) were hospitalized in Billings with COVID-19 illness and an average of two were in intensive care with one patient on a ventilator.

This is a huge turnaround from the weeks of the COVID-19 Omicron variant surge in January and February when nearly 3,000 new COVID-19 cases were reported among Yellowstone County residents in a single week. Billings' two hospitals then had between 40 and 90 COVID-19 inpatients daily. Up to 20 patients were in ICU and most of them were on ventilators.

While the pandemic virus is much less prevalent now than earlier this year, experience with COVID-19 shows that it can return and surge again. Vaccination remains the safest, most effective measure for reducing the risk of serious illness and death from this virus. Free COVID-19 vaccinations are available by appointment at RiverStone Health Clinics in Billings, Bridger, Joliet and Worden. Call 406.247.3382 or 406.247.3350.

Free at-home COVID-19 test kits may be picked up at any RiverStone Health Clinic during regular operating hours or in the lobby of the Lil Anderson Center, the four-story building at RiverStone Health, 123 S. 27<sup>th</sup> St.

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