



Media Information:

For immediate release:

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Yellowstone County COVID-19 deaths total 567

Billings, MT – Four Yellowstone County residents died of COVID-19 related illness in May.

Additionally, through death certificate reconciliation by Yellowstone County and Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services officials, six more deaths are being reported today.

A death isn't counted as COVID-19 related until it has been medically confirmed that infection with the pandemic virus caused the death or was a contributing factor in the death. Our county's pandemic death toll stands at 567 residents lost to the virus. Seventy-eight of those deaths occurred in 2022.

All ten of the Yellowstone County residents whose deaths are reported today had underlying health conditions that put them at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness. The deceased include:

- A man in his 80s, who died at a Billings hospital on May 26, 2022. He was vaccinated.
- A man in his 90s, who died at a Billings hospital on May 15, 2022. He was vaccinated and boosted.
- A man in his 80s, who died at home on May 9, 2022. He was vaccinated and boosted.
- A woman in her 60s, who died at a long-term care facility on May 6, 2022. She was not vaccinated.
- A woman in her 50s, who died at home on April 28, 2022. She was not vaccinated.
- A woman in her 80s, who died at home on March 13, 2022. She was not vaccinated.
- A man in his 70s, who died at a long-term care facility on March 12, 2022. He was not vaccinated.

- A woman in her 40s, who died at home on Jan. 7, 2022. She was not vaccinated.
- A woman in her 80s, who died at home on Oct. 19, 2021. She was not vaccinated.
- A woman in her 70s, who died at a long-term care facility on Jan. 14, 2021. She was not vaccinated.

RiverStone Health extends sincere condolences to grieving friends and family of these COVID-19 victims, whose deaths serve as a sober reminder that COVID-19 remains a threat to vulnerable individuals.

The number of COVID-19 cases in Yellowstone County rose in May, but the number of COVID-19 patients hospitalized in Billings is at the lowest level since summer 2020.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still considered our county at low risk for spreading infection in its May 26 update. But 11 Montana counties, including Park, Gallatin, Sweet Grass and six in the southeast corner of the state were listed as high risk for spreading COVID-19.

In May, 601 Yellowstone County residents tested positive for COVID-19, compared to 185 in April, but far below the peak of 7,758 cases reported in January of this year during the Omicron variant surge.

In May, Billings hospitals logged 14 new inpatients with COVID-19 illness who were Yellowstone County residents, compared with nine in March. Hospital admissions peaked in October 2021 with 321 Yellowstone County residents admitted that month – along with many other COVID-19 patients from outside our county.

Vaccination remains the safest, most effective measure for reducing the risk of serious illness and death from this virus.

The CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccinations for everyone age 5 and older. One booster dose of vaccine is recommended at least five months after the initial vaccination series because the vaccine's effectiveness decreases over time. People age 50 and older as well as younger people with certain health conditions should get a second booster shot if it's been at least four months since their first booster. Consult your personal healthcare provider if you are unsure whether you are eligible for a second booster.

Free COVID-19 vaccinations are available by appointment at RiverStone Health Clinics in Billings, Bridger, Joliet and Worden and through the RiverStone Health Immunization Clinic Call 406.247.3382 (Immunization Clinic) or 406.247.3350 (RiverStone Health Clinics) to schedule an appointment.

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. 27th St.

If you test positive for COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider right away. You may be eligible for prescription treatment medications. These medications must be started soon after a positive test to be effective.

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