# Media Information:

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### Seven more COVID-19 deaths reported, updated vaccines available

**Billings, MT –** On Wednesday, RiverStone Health will begin offering vaccinations updated to offer stronger protection against Omicron variants of the COVID-19 virus. Omicron is the predominant type of the virus circulating in Yellowstone County and throughout the United States.

The updated vaccinations will be offered at no charge and are available to people age 12 and older. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is recommending this new vaccine for people who previously received COVID-19 vaccinations at least two months ago. If you have questions about when you should get an Omicron vaccination, contact your personal healthcare provider.

 All community members are welcome to call the RiverStone Health Immunization Clinic at 406.247.3382 for Omicron vaccination appointments.

New and established RiverStone Health Clinic patients may receive the Omicron vaccine at no charge with appointments starting next week in Billings 406.247.3350, Worden 406.967.2255, Bridger 406.662.3740 or Joliet 406.962.9062.

The Omicron variants appear to be more contagious than earlier COVID-19 mutations, but less likely to cause serious illness or death. However, six Yellowstone County residents died of COVID-19 related illness during August. Additionally, another July death was identified recently through death certificate review by the Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder's Office. These deaths bring our county's pandemic loss to 580 lives since April 2020.

In the seven latest reports, all victims had underlying health conditions that put them at high risk for severe illness. They include:
- A women in her 70s who died at home on July 15. She was vaccinated.
- A man in his 80s who died at a Billings hospital on Aug. 4. He had been vaccinated.
- A man in his 90s who died at home on Aug. 4. He was not vaccinated.
- A woman in her 70s who died at a Billings hospital on Aug. 11. She was vaccinated.
- A man in his 90s who died at a Billings hospital on Aug. 13. He was vaccinated.

- A man in his 90s who died on Aug. 18 at a local long-term care facility. He had been vaccinated.
- A man in his 70s who died on Aug. 29 at a Billings hospital. There is no record of him being vaccinated.

During the month of August, Billings hospitals had a daily average of 22 COVID-19 patients, including an average of two patients in ICU and one patient who was on a ventilator.

The daily average number of new COVID-19 cases reported in Yellowstone County decreased slightly from reported an average of 48 new cases of COVID-19 every day during the third week of August to 35 new cases daily in the week ending Sept. 4. These numbers are cases reported to the state health department. Many other cases are not reported when people have positive home tests but don't feel sick enough to consult a healthcare professional.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists Yellowstone County as high-risk for COVID-19 transmission and recommends these precautions:
- Stay up to date on vaccines.
- Wear a mask indoors in public and on public transportation, such as buses, taxis and planes.
- Get tested if you have symptoms. Free at-home COVID-19 tests are available during regular business hours at RiverStone Health Clinics in Billings, Bridger, Joliet and Worden.
- If you are at high risk for severe illness, consider taking additional precautions, such as avoiding crowds.

If you test positive for COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider immediately. You may be eligible for prescription medications that must be started soon after a positive test to be effective against COVID-19. For more information, visit covid.riverstonehealth.org.

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