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For immediate release

For more information, contact: Kim Engel, Director, 308-760-2415, kengel@pphd.org

Two COVID cases of the Omicron variant identified in the Panhandle, Changes in COVID isolation and quarantine guidance

Two COVID cases of the Omicron variant have been identified in the Panhandle. This variant may spread more easily than other variants, including Delta.

Only one of the current monoclonal antibody treatments is effective against this variant and will initially be in limited supply due to high demand throughout the nation. Panhandle residents are urged to take all necessary precautions for the safety of themselves and their loved ones.

“COVID vaccination decreases the risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID. We strongly encourage COVID vaccination for everyone 5 and older and boosters for everyone 16 and older. Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and reduce the impact of COVID on our communities,” said Kim Engel, Panhandle Public Health District Director.

If You Test Positive for COVID (Isolate)

Everyone, regardless of vaccination status.

- Stay home for 5 days.
- If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your house.
- Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.

If you have a fever, continue to stay home until your fever resolves.

If You Were Exposed to Someone with COVID (Quarantine)

If you are: UP TO DATE

Have been boosted
OR

If you are: NOT UP TO DATE

Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and

<p>Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Completed the primary series of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a mask around others for 10 days. • Test on day 5, if possible. <p><i>If you develop symptoms get a test and stay home.</i></p>	<p>are not boosted</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and are not boosted</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Are unvaccinated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home for 5 days. After that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days. • If you can't quarantine you must wear a mask for 10 days. • Test on day 5 if possible. <p><i>If you develop symptoms get a test and stay home.</i></p>
<p>Continue to follow employer policies; these recommendations do not supersede their policies.</p>	

Data from South Africa and the United Kingdom demonstrate that vaccine effectiveness against infection for two doses of an mRNA vaccine is approximately 35%. A COVID vaccine booster dose restores vaccine effectiveness against infection to 75%.

Vaccine access is available across the Panhandle, find a location near you <https://tinyurl.com/2p85sy3a>. Current COVID testing access can be found at <http://pphd.org/COVID-19.html>.

The Panhandle COVID dashboard is available at www.pphd.org. The state COVID dashboard is available at <https://tinyurl.com/ufj9fcuf>. For the most up to date information from the CDC, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Panhandle Public Health District, Region 21, 22, and 23 Emergency Management, and Scotts Bluff County Health Department are working as a unified command on this evolving situation. Essential updates will be regularly communicated to the public and community partners.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. Visit our website www.pphd.org.