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Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

Health official: 'best vaccine is the one you can get the soonest'

The Medical Director of the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is emphasizing the safety of the three available COVID-19 vaccines in an effort to curb skepticism and encourage residents to get vaccinated.

"We now have three different vaccines available to fight this pandemic," said Dr. Josh Meyerson. "This is great news! All three of these vaccines are safe and effective and I can say with certainty that all three vaccines provide levels of protection that are comparable to some of the best vaccines we have for other serious infectious diseases for which we routinely vaccinate people," he said.

The three vaccines that have been fully vetted and awarded Emergency Use Authorization by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and are available throughout the United States, Michigan, and the health department's jurisdiction include Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson (Janssen). The Pfizer and Moderna are two-dose vaccines while the Janssen is one-dose.

Dr. Meyerson said he fully supports all three currently available vaccines for COVID-19. "All three vaccines are safe and have been shown to be highly effective at preventing symptomatic illness and hospitalization. In the clinical trials all three vaccines were 100 percent effective in preventing deaths from COVID-19. There is also growing evidence that all three vaccines help prevent asymptomatic illness, too. This means that people who have been vaccinated are not likely to spread COVID-19 to others who are not vaccinated," he emphasized.

There has been much debate about the advantages of one brand of vaccine over the other, but it's difficult to compare their efficacy, Dr. Meyerson said. The different brands of COVID-19 vaccines have not been studied in head-to-head comparisons. The vaccines have each been studied in slightly different groups of people and tested at different phases of the pandemic.

"With COVID-19 continuing to circulate as we work toward community immunity, my medical advice is this: the best vaccine is the one you can get the soonest," Dr. Meyerson said.

Additional information about mRNA vaccines – Pfizer and Moderna – is available here. Additional information about the Adenovirus vaccine – Johnson & Johnson – is available here.

Specific medical questions about your health care and the vaccines should be addressed to your health care provider.

Today, March 17, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is reporting 46 new cases: Antrim (11), Charlevoix (9), Emmet (6), and Otsego (20) counties. As of 4 p.m. today, the health department is reporting:

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

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- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (1,042), Charlevoix (1,112), Emmet (1,591), and Otsego (1,352).
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (884), Charlevoix (982), Emmet (1,374), and Otsego (1,033).
- Confirmed COVID-19 associated deaths in the following counties: Antrim (20), Charlevoix (13), Emmet (38), and Otsego (27).

The State of Michigan is reporting 615,792 cases and 15,810 deaths.

Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction by liking and following our Facebook page and visiting our COVID-19 Data Dashboard. To locate a testing facility, visit the Michigan COVID-19 Test Finder website. To track the risk levels of COVID-19 pandemic indicators, visit the MI Safe Start Map website. For more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the MDHHS vaccine website or the CDC vaccine website.