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Health Department of Northwest Michigan

Omicron Boosters Approved for Younger Children

Pfizer authorized for 5 and older; Moderna for 6 and older

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has [authorized](#) the bivalent COVID-19 vaccine – also known as the Omicron Booster – for children as young as five years old. The single-dose booster may be given at least two months after children and adults complete the primary or other booster vaccinations.

The Omicron Booster has replaced the original COVID-19 booster formulas. Similar to how flu shots are updated annually, the booster contains components from the original virus strain as well as the BA.4 and BA.5 variants. Previously approved for anyone 12 years and older, the younger age group was added Friday through the FDA amending emergency use authorizations for Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech.

The Omicron Booster includes components from the original virus strain and the BA.4 and BA.5 variants to provide better protection against COVID-19, according to the FDA. By including specific genetic material, the vaccine instructs cells in the body to make the distinctive “spike” protein of the original virus strain and the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron variants.

“Because of the medical advances, we are far from the pandemic state we faced in 2020 and 2021. The boosters, which now help children as young as five, are protecting people throughout the region and world,” said Dr. Joshua Meyerson, Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW) Medical Director. “Anyone who has completed the primary series is now being offered the bivalent booster. With children back in school and people resuming pre-pandemic activities, it’s wise to remain diligent about protecting yourself and those around you.”

Based on interest, staff at HDNW has added the Omicron Booster to the fall flu clinics. Because both vaccines may be given the same day, many residents are taking advantage of one stop, two vaccines.

The agency’s central intake staff is answering calls and scheduling appointments. To keep up with demand, HDNW has expanded the number of onsite clinics in all four counties. In response to invitations to bring teams into businesses, senior living facilities, and schools, HDNW is also staffing community-based clinics to make the vaccines more accessible.

In October and November, there are about 50 flu/Omicron Booster clinics scheduled at HDNW sites. An additional 42 community-based clinics are in play: 12 at schools, 13 at businesses, and 17 at senior-focused facilities.

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.

While Omicron Boosters may be [scheduled online](#), appointments to receive both the flu vaccine and the new booster at the same appointment should be made by calling 800-432-4121. To date, more than 6.8 million Michigan residents, ages 6 months and up, have gotten at least their first dose of COVID-19 vaccines.

Cutline: Courtney Mullens, a nurse with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, helps staff a flu/Omicron Booster clinic Oct. 12 at the Antrim County Commission on Aging in Bellaire, Mich.

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Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction by [liking and following our Facebook page](#). We provide COVID-19 testing and a variety of vaccines at our regular clinics in Charlevoix, Gaylord, Harbor Springs/Petoskey, and Mancelona. 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](#).