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CHAIRMAN'S PRESS RELEASE

HOSPITALIZATIONS UP; XBB1.5 IMPACT UNCLEAR

COVID-19 cases

Hospitalizations related to COVID-19 and positive COVID-19 cases remain up, according to the Columbia County Department of Health this morning.

"This week looks a lot like last week, with hospitalizations standing at 18 and one individual in the ICU, " said county DOH Director Jack Mabb, who added that positive cases for the first four days this week numbered 69. That pace, should it continue, would bring the county to more than 450 positive cases for the month of January.

"It's good to maintain an historical perspective on the numbers. The 450 for this month would be one of the highest months we've had in the past six months, yet it compares very favorably to last January when the county had a record setting 3,000 positives."

As far as the new variant XBB1.5 goes, Director Mabb said given that the state DOH estimates that currently more than 70% of the positive cases here in New York are the new variant, it's a pretty much a sure thing it's here in the county. "It doesn't seem to be driving up our numbers dramatically. But we'll have to see how it evolves," he said.

County DOH experienced one of its slowest clinics at A.B. Shaw last Thursday, with but one flu shot given, 16 COVID-19 vaccines and no monkeypox. Despite the low numbers, the department will continue to offer the various vaccines at A.B. Shaw.

Upcoming DOH COVID-19 vaccination clinics

The Columbia County Department of Health will offer COVID-19 and flu vaccine clinics at the A.B. Shaw Fire Department in Claverack on Thursdays (not on Thanksgiving) from 3-5:30 p.m. throughout the month of January. All vaccines are available on a walk-in basis. For additional information, contact the county DOH at 518-828-3358.

County vaccination rates

As of Saturday, January 7, the Columbia County Department of Health had administered 11,300 first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. Second doses now number 9,575. The vaccine administered is Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson. Note: J&J – a single-dose vaccine – is added as a first shot.

Third shots (boosters) of Moderna or Pfizer now number 4,132. Fourth shots (boosters) of Moderna or Pfizer now number 715. Johnson & Johnson boosters number 65. Pfizer bivalent boosters stand at 450, and 812 of Moderna.

Pediatric first shots number 704, with 665 second shots and 77 boosters.

The total number of Columbia County residents by all vaccine providers, as shown on the NYS COVID-19 vaccine tracker website: 42,319 people with primary series, or 70.6 percent of the county's 59,916 population.

Student testing, home testing and affirmation reports

The DOH continues to provide testing for students and staff of Columbia County schools who require a negative test to return to school. This will be by appointment only at the DOH Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 12:45-3:30 p.m. Parents may contact (518) 828-3358 X1251 to schedule these appointments when needed. This testing will still only be for staff/students of Columbia County schools who need a negative COVID test to return to school.

Also available on the county DOH website is information on filing home testing reports as well as affirmation letters of quarantine and/or isolation that may be required by employers.

Disclaimer

It is the county's intention to issue accurate information regarding the coronavirus situation under conditions that can change by the minute. For the most up-to-date, accurate information, visit the County Department of Health's website at <https://www.columbiacountynyhealth.com> or their Facebook page @: <https://www.facebook.com/Columbia-County-Department-of-Health-469399129790791>. The state's coronavirus website, with up-to-the-minute information, can be located at <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>.

Every Thursday afternoon, Columbia County Board of Supervisors Chairman Matt Murell will issue a press release on the coronavirus situation. The releases can be found on the Columbia County website and the Facebook pages of the Sheriff's Office, the Department of Health, and the Emergency Management Office.