



DICKINSON COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

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Omicron variant more transmissible, maybe less dangerous

By Kathy Hageman/
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Although the newly discovered COVID-19 Omicron variant appears to be more transmissible, the symptoms are reported to be milder than previous versions of the virus, according to Dickinson County Health Department Director/Health Officer John Hultgren.

“At this point it’s kind of a wait and see while the experts study it, but if it doesn’t result in a large number of hospitalizations you may not see a big panic,” Hultgren said Monday.

Hultgren said the doctor who treated the first patient in South Africa, where the variant was discovered, indicated the symptoms seem to be more mild than previous COVID variants.

“People did not lose their sense of taste or smell. Some had a mild cough,” Hultgren explained. “They complain of being really tired for a couple of days.”

The biggest concern with the Omicron variant is its higher transmissibility and larger number of mutations than the Delta variant.

It is unknown if the COVID vaccines will protect individuals from the Omicron variant. However, as is true with Delta and the other variants, there is always a chance a vaccinated person could still get the virus.

“Pfizer (one of the vaccine manufacturers) said they could easily get a new vaccine on the market in 100 days or so. I’m sure the other companies would do that as well,” Hultgren added.

“So, we’re still encouraging people to get the booster shot and we still have people coming in for their initial COVID vaccine as well,” he said.

Also, two new antiviral pills currently are being reviewed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Both have shown promise in preventing hospitalizations and deaths among people at high risk for COVID-19, Hultgren explained.

While the final word on the effect the new variant will have on the populace is still unknown, Hultgren said Omicron is being studied intensively and more information will be available in upcoming days.

Vaccine clinics offered

The Dickinson County Health Department is offering several COVID-19 vaccine clinics before the Christmas holiday for children and adults:

* A COVID-19 Vaccination Pediatric Pfizer Clinic, for ages 5 to 11, is set from 4 to 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 2 at the health department, located at 1001 N. Brady. Contact the health department at (785) 263-4179 to schedule an appointment. This clinic is by appointment only.

Two additional Pediatric Pfizer Clinic also will be offered on Dec. 9 and 16 by the health department. The times and location remain the same.

* A COVID-19 Vaccination Booster Clinic for adults is set from noon to 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 3 at the Holm West Building, located at 2104 N. Buckeye. This clinic is by appointment only. To schedule, visit www.dkcoks.org or call the health department office at (785) 263-4179.

COVID locally

Sixty-seven new cases of COVID-19 were reported in the Nov. 29 Dickinson County Health Department COVID update.

The update includes a correction on the number of total county deaths, reducing it from 62 on Nov. 22 to 61 in the Monday, Nov. 29 update.

The change was due to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment making a change to its numbers.

At this point it is still unknown how the extended Thanksgiving holiday will affect COVID numbers locally.