

## Dr. Marjorie Bessel Press Conference Sept. 29

Good afternoon.

This past week we have seen a slight decline in COVID hospital admissions, though our total number of hospitalizations remains unseasonably high for this time of year. ICU utilization, in particular, has been very high for the past 4 weeks, with our total occupancy continuing to exceed that from our 2020 summer surge.

Vaccination continues to be the best and most effective way to fight this virus. This is demonstrated by the extremely high percentage of hospitalized COVID patients who are unvaccinated. I've said this before, and I will say it again – the vaccines greatly reduce your chances of experiencing severe symptoms that require hospital-level intervention.

This past week the FDA and CDC expanded its vaccination recommendations to include booster shots for those who received the Pfizer vaccine initially and are at higher risk of severe illness if they become infected with COVID. This includes adults over the age of 65, anyone over the age of 18 with underlying medical conditions and those who are over 18 who live or work in high-risk settings. For a full list of conditions and high-risk settings, you can visit the CDC website.

Please keep in mind that this recommendation was only made for the Pfizer vaccine. Booster shots are not recommended at

this time for those who were first vaccinated with the Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccines. High-risk individuals who received those vaccines will likely need booster shots as well. More data on the effectiveness and safety of Moderna and J&J boosters is expected soon.

For many Americans, boosters are not a consideration because they have not yet received their first dose of the COVID vaccine. If you are among the 45% of people in the U.S. who have not been vaccinated, please consider doing so as soon as possible. The vaccines are safe and very effective in preventing serious illness and death.

Thank you.