Health Department Provides Case Information, Overview of COVID-19 Efforts

PITTSBURGH – This week is an off-week for the COVID-19 briefing. As such, the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) provided the following COVID-19 update:

- Cases remain high with around 712 cases reported a day, based on the past week’s reports. PCR positivity rates remain high at over 11%.

- The county is receiving data from the state in a new format that has impacted our COVID-19 dashboards. Staff are working to update the dashboard and expect that it will remain static for a little longer as the work is being done.

- The Health Department continues to work on a comprehensive analysis of breakthrough cases as it is now receiving joined data, as noted above. The data thus far show that vaccinated persons continue to have greater protection from the virus and the potential for serious illness, hospitalization, and death. We hope to be able to share breakthrough data on an ongoing basis in the near future.

- The department continues to partner with PA 2-1-1 Southwest, powered by United Way, to provide information and guidance on the virus as well as any vaccine-related questions. Residents are encouraged to call with any and all questions they may have.

- Residents should continue to follow CDC guidance on masking, maintain physical distancing, wash your hands regularly, and if you’re sick, stay home and get tested.

There have been a number of questions related to the Omicron variant. There is a great deal that is unknown at this time. ACHD, like many others, are closely monitoring scientific data and news. We will continue to be vigilant in our own community.

- This afternoon, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed the first case of the Omicron variant in the United States. An individual in California who had recently traveled to South Africa tested positive for the strain. The individual was fully vaccinated and had mild symptoms that are improving. The agency is currently sequencing about 1 out of every 7 positive PCR tests for COVID-19 to identify the variant.

- The CDC has ordered airlines to provide contact information for passengers coming from the Republic of Botswana, the Kingdom of Eswatini, the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Republic of Malawi, the Republic of Mozambique, the Republic of Namibia, the Republic of South Africa, and the Republic of Zimbabwe. The information is being used to combat the new variant. ACHD staff will be calling all persons returning from the eight southern African countries currently under the federal travel guidelines to ensure that they are quarantining and getting a PCR test. To date, there are no travelers returning from those countries who reside in Allegheny County.

- Based on the state’s dashboard, 754,152 county residents have been vaccinated, another 118,161 have been partially vaccinated and 207,145 residents have received boosters. Vaccination and boosters remain paramount in protecting against COVID, including any new variants. If you have
not yet been vaccinated, or need a booster, the county’s website includes a vaccine provider search: https://www.vaccines.gov/search/.

• The CDC has strengthened its recommendation on booster doses for individuals who are 18 years and older. They are recommended for those individuals either when they are 6 months after their initial Pfizer of Moderna series, or two months after their initial J&J vaccine. Early data from South Africa suggest increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant, and scientists in the United States and around the world are urgently examining vaccine effectiveness related to this variant. The full CDC statement is available here.

The next scheduled COVID-19 briefing will be Wednesday, December 8 at 4 PM. For more information on COVID-19, including a testing site locator map and vaccine provider locations, click here.

# # #

Debra L. Bogen, MD, Director
Allegheny County Health Department – Public Information Office
542 Fourth Avenue │ Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Phone: 412-687-ACHD (2243) │ Fax: 412-578-8325
www.alleghenycounty.us/healthdepartment

Follow us: allegheny alerts | facebook | instagram | linkedin | twitter | youtube