



## **An urgent health message for our community**

We know you're exhausted from nearly two years of this pandemic.

Health care workers are tired, too — and, as the leaders of central Ohio's hospitals and health care systems, we are eager to reach the end of this, where we have control of COVID-19 and can live with fewer limitations.

However, we're not there yet.

Our organizations are now preparing for what could be the largest surge yet in COVID-19 cases this winter. But the thousands of health care workers dedicated to caring for our community need **your** help NOW to continue to provide health care for everyone who needs it.

### **What we're facing**

Hospitals across Central Ohio and much of Ohio are already at or near capacity. Our emergency departments are full and wait times are long. Many hospitals are facing the difficult decision to start limiting care to other patients because of the number of COVID-19 patients in the hospital. The vast majority of hospitalized COVID-19 patients are **not** vaccinated. And with the flu returning in greater numbers this season, the situation will be made worse if a large number of patients need to be hospitalized for influenza.

This year, our community has better tools: If you're vaccinated for both COVID-19 and flu, you're significantly less likely to have a severe infection needing hospitalization.

### **How a surge could change your health care**

With limited space and care providers, some health care organizations have begun postponing elective surgeries, reallocating space and resources, and implementing additional protocols to ensure that we continue to care for those who most need our help. And with this surge in COVID-19 patients, we are struggling to find beds for patients who need inpatient care.

## What you should do

You have the power to help curb the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the stress on hospital resources.

- **If you're eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine, get vaccinated.**
- **If you're vaccinated but haven't gotten a booster, get a COVID-19 booster.**
- **Get a flu vaccine.**  
Vaccinating yourself and your eligible children can reduce the likelihood of influenza infection, prevent severe symptoms, and keep you out of the hospital — freeing up resources for other emergencies.
- **Visit the right place for the right care.** Urgent care, your family doctor or health care provider, and even a virtual health visit can effectively manage many conditions, like colds and minor injuries. The emergency department is best reserved for life-threatening situations like trouble breathing, chest pain, or uncontrolled bleeding.
- **Wear a face mask** in public spaces, especially indoors and in situations where you can't socially distance even if you're vaccinated
- **Stay home** from work, school, your place of worship, or other people's homes when you're feeling sick.
- Continue to **wash your hands** regularly and **practice good health habits.**

This holiday season, we want you to enjoy celebrations with your family.

And we want to be able to care for you and your family should you need us.

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