

PSA Script for COVID-19 (August 4, 2021)-

Hello again. This is Dr. Tom Faber, Clinical Director of the Zuni IHS Hospital. I wanted to provide an update on the COVID-19 situation, as a lot has changed in the past several months. This message is being recorded on August 4th, 2021.

The good news is that the COVID-19 vaccines have proven to be extremely safe, highly effective at preventing illness, and readily available to anyone 12 years old and older. The other piece of good news is that, over the past eight months, we at Zuni IHS have fully vaccinated nearly 6000 people. In addition, over 90% of eligible people in McKinley County have received at least one dose of the vaccine. This means that, unlike last year at this time, our community is so much more protected against COVID-19. Worldwide, over 4 billion doses of the COVID vaccine have been administered, and this experience has proven that the vaccine works at protecting against severe illness from the COVID virus. In other words, if you are fully vaccinated against COVID, you are protected from an infection that could cause hospital admission, a need for extra oxygen to help breathing, or death. This is hugely exciting news, and this is why it's so important that everyone in Zuni gets vaccinated right away. Getting your vaccine is quick and easy to do- just call 782-7591 to schedule your vaccine appointment. We also offer Vaccine Clinics in the community for those who can't make it up to the hospital. Again- once you're fully vaccinated, meaning 2 weeks after your second dose, you are protected from severe COVID disease that could result in hospital admission or death.

Now, let's talk about the Delta Variant. The Delta Variant is a still COVID-19, but it is a new version of the virus that makes it much more contagious. That means that, compared to the virus we were dealing with last year, the Delta Variant can pass easier from person to person. If someone with the old COVID strain could infect 2-3 people, someone with the delta variant can now infect 3-4 people. While the delta variant is more contagious, however, there is no evidence that the delta variant makes people sicker than the old COVID strain did. And very importantly, the COVID Vaccine still works against the Delta Variant.

What is new with the Delta Variant is that unvaccinated people are at even higher risk for getting infected and they cannot rely on the immunity of others to prevent spread. In fact, while the COVID vaccine does prevent severe symptoms, it is possible for a vaccinated person to test positive and even have mild symptoms like cough and fatigue. In addition, it appears that if a vaccinated person catches the Delta Variant, they can even pass the virus along to others. As a result, the CDC recently updated their guidance for fully vaccinated people. The new guidance is as follows:

- 1) Fully vaccinated people should go back to wearing masks in public indoor settings in areas of high rates of transmission. Fortunately, Zuni is not experiencing high rates of transmission, but to be on the safe side, it is smart to wear a mask when in public, indoor spaces even if you're vaccinated. This is especially true for anyone with chronic medical conditions or a weakened immune system.

- 2) The CDC is now recommending that even fully vaccinated people who are close contacts of someone with COVID, should get tested 3-5 days after exposure. They don't need to quarantine while they are waiting for the test result, but they should wear a mask in public indoor settings until they receive a negative test result. Also, it's important to wait at least 3 days after exposure before getting tested, as it can take that long for the test to turn positive. Unvaccinated people who are close contacts of a COVID case do still need to quarantine for 14 days or until their test comes back negative.
- 3) Right now, booster shots for COVID vaccination are not recommended, but we will update you if this guidance changes.

We are offering drive-through COVID testing at the hospital Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings from 8:30 am- 11:30 am. After you are tested, you will be given a number to call for your results. Of course, our urgent care clinic and ER remain open 24/7 to help you if you feel sick. If you only have mild symptoms and just want to be tested, however, it is best to use the drive through testing services rather than checking into urgent care- this helps to prevent spread and also frees up medical services for those who need them. Pharmacy refills can be picked up inside the hospital from 8am- 6pm Monday – Friday except not until 1pm on Wednesday.

Thanks for your attention. We are strongly encouraging everyone 12 and older to be vaccinated. It truly is the best way to protect yourself, your family, and your community. Thank you for all of your efforts to prevent spread of this virus. They are making a big difference.

Thank you