



# LCHD

LAUREL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

*Serving Our Community Since 1931*

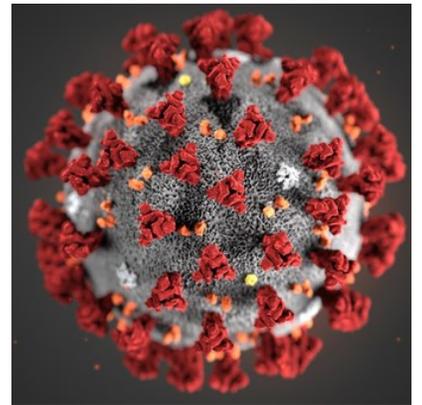


**Laurel County Health Department Volume 6, Issue 4 October 2023**

## Fall Newsletter 2023

### Laurel County COVID-19 Update and Monovalent COVID-19 Vaccine

As of September 18, 2023 KY CHFS and DPH is reporting 46% of the county population (28,011 individuals out of 60,813) are vaccinated in Laurel County for COVID-19. On October 30th LCHD reported a total of 89 new COVID-19 cases from October 23 to October 27. As of September 9, 2023 the total number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths for Laurel County is 268.



The updated monovalent COVID-19 vaccines were authorized by the FDA on September 11, 2023 and are now available. According to the CDC, the updated monovalent vaccines are “formulated to more closely target currently circulating variants and to provide better protection against serious consequences of COVID-19, including hospitalization and death.” Following FDA’s authorization on September 11, CDC updated its COVID-19 vaccination guidance on September 12, 2023, recommending “everyone 6 months and older get an updated COVID-19 vaccine to protect against the potentially serious outcomes of COVID-19 illness this fall and winter.” Since the authorization of the updated monovalent COVID-19 vaccines, distribution and use of the COVID-19 bivalent vaccines are no longer authorized. Laurel County Health Department currently administers the Moderna monovalent COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccines are available to the uninsured and underinsured as well as those with insurance or who self-pay. LCHD utilizes same day scheduling to set up appointments.

While the general population’s immunity against COVID-19 is more robust now than the onset of COVID-19 (due to prior infection, vaccination, or both) immunity weakens over time, and viruses change and mutate, which highlights the importance of staying up to date on recommended immunizations to prevent the spread of illness.

# 2023-2024 Flu Season Update

While seasonal influenza (flu) viruses are detected year-round in the United States, flu viruses typically circulate during the fall and winter during what's known as the flu season. The exact timing and duration of flu seasons varies, but flu activity often begins to increase in October. Most of the time flu activity peaks between December and February, although significant activity can last as late as May.

For most persons who need only one dose of influenza vaccine for the season, vaccination should ideally be offered during September or October. However, vaccination should continue throughout the season as long as influenza viruses are circulating.

Tracking influenza activity in the Southern Hemisphere usually “allows some degree of predictability” for what we can expect in the U.S. This year's Southern Hemisphere flu season had an earlier peak during April to May, compared to typical peaks in June to July. Of the specimens that tested positive for Influenza, approximately 90% of the viruses were Influenza Type A and 10% were Influenza Type B. While tracking activity in the southern hemisphere offers a degree of predictability, that doesn't necessarily mean we will see the same. There's a lot of variability with the virus, and global health officials say it's still too soon to predict the severity of the season in the Northern Hemisphere.

Each year flu activity is tracked and reported to the public. This year in Kentucky influenza surveillance data will be coming from what is automatically uploaded into NEDSS (National Electronic Disease Surveillance System). This new process is more passive than what has been done in the past, this means we won't have every flu case numbered, but we will still be able to identify disease *trends* which will continue to paint a picture of flu burden in the community and state.



# Laurel County Health Department Public Health Accreditation Board Re-Accreditation Update

LCHD achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) in 2017. Laurel County Health Department is one of 18 PHAB Accredited Health Departments in the state of KY. To maintain accreditation status, health departments are evaluated against a set of national standards 5 years after accreditation has been awarded.



**Pictured Above: Brandi Gilley and Mark Hensley submit the application for reaccreditation to PHAB**

Reaccreditation ensures that accredited health departments continue to evolve, improve, and advance their public health practice to serve their community. The PHAB Reaccreditation Application opened for Laurel County Health Department in January of 2023 and on September 29, 2023, LCHD successfully submitted all required documentation for reaccreditation ahead of its deadline of December 31, 2023.

Following submission of required documentation, PHAB has a window of 90 days to review the application and request additional documentation if it is needed. A PHAB Accreditation Specialist will score each of the 55 required measures as one of the following: Fully Demonstrated, Largely Demonstrated, Slightly Demonstrated, or Not Demonstrated. A site visit team consisting of 1-3 volunteer peer reviewers will be assigned to the health department. The site visit team will review the draft site visit report put together by the PHAB Accreditation Specialist as well any measures the specialist scored as Slightly Demonstrated or Not Demonstrated. The site visit team will also review documentation for at least one measure in each of the ten PHAB Domains.

The team will then reach consensus on the scoring and all comments to be included in the Site Visit Report. A site visit will then be scheduled where the Site Visit Team focuses on gathering information to validate and verify evidence of the documentation submitted. The Site Visit Team finalizes the Site Visit Report and submits it within the electronic PHAB system. The Site Visit Report has two audiences: the Accreditation Committee uses the report to make an accreditation decision and the health department uses the report for additional work (if required by PHAB through an action report or Annual Report process), continuous quality improvement, and Annual Reports to PHAB.

The PHAB Accreditation Committee (which meets quarterly) reviews the health department's Site Visit Report and makes the final decision on the health department's accreditation status. This decision is based on the Site Visit Report, including the Site Visit Team's assessments of conformity with each measure, conformity comments, and answers to overall questions. There are three accreditation decisions that the Accreditation Committee can make: *Continued Accreditation* (5 years), *Accreditation Committee Action Requirements* (ACAR) –(referred to as an action plan), or *Not Accredited*.

# Respiratory Virus Season

In addition to influenza and the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), COVID-19 is now a part of the regular respiratory virus season. Each year, fall and winter see an increased circulation of viruses that cause respiratory disease. Some people may have mild symptoms but others may have moderate to severe symptoms that require hospitalization. Although respiratory virus season is something that is seen every year, it can place a strain on the healthcare system. Some respiratory virus seasons may be more severe than others. The severity of a respiratory virus season is in part determined by the strains of viruses circulating and the general population's immunity to these viruses. Simple but effective ways to reduce your risk of getting sick or spreading illness are:

- Stay up to date on vaccinations. Vaccines are safe and effective for preventing illness, talk to your healthcare provider about recommended vaccines, to ensure that you are up to date
- Practice good hand hygiene and make washing your hands a regular habit throughout the day. If you are unable to wash your hands use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes. If you have to cough or sneeze cover your nose and mouth with a tissue, if you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow not your hands.
- Stay home if you're sick to reduce the spread of illness. If you are unable to stay home, consider increasing your physical distance from other people, sanitizing your work environment and practicing increased hand washing.

## Healthy Living with Diabetes

The next Healthy Living with Diabetes 4-week online Zoom series is scheduled to kick off on Nov 14th. Each session is led by licensed diabetes educators and health professionals at Laurel, Knox, and Whitley County Health Departments. You can join the sessions from the comfort of your own home by computer, tablet, or smart phone.

### When?

Nov 14th (9AM-11AM)

Nov 21st (9AM-11AM)

Nov 28th (9AM-11AM)

Each of the FREE 2 hour sessions provide the individual, family, or support persons with information to improve the quality of life and prevent complications from the disease. Attend all sessions and be eligible to win a \$50 Grocery Card. If you have questions, please contact our office at (606)-864-5187.

**Register today at: [diabeteshealthyling2021@gmail.com](mailto:diabeteshealthyling2021@gmail.com)**

# National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

For nearly forty years the United States has recognized October as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Each October serves as a time to provide education about breast cancer and spotlight the importance of early detection through regular screening and access to timely, quality care. According to the CDC breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women in the U.S. (following some types of skin cancer). Staying healthy throughout your life will lower your risk of developing cancer, and improve your chances of surviving cancer if it occurs. Many factors over the course of a lifetime can influence your breast cancer risk and while some factors, such as getting older or your family history can't be changed, you can help lower your risk of breast cancer by taking care of your health in the following ways:



- Keep a healthy weight.
- Be physically active.
- Choose not to drink alcohol, or drink alcohol in moderation.
- If you are taking, or have been told to take, hormone replacement therapy or oral contraceptives (birth control pills), ask your doctor about the risks.
- Breastfeed your children, if possible.
- If you have a family history of breast cancer or inherited changes in your BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, talk to your doctor about other ways to lower your risk.

It is also important to get regular screenings, breast cancer screening means checking a woman's breasts for cancer before there are signs or symptoms of the disease. Breast cancer screening tests include a mammogram, breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), clinical breast exams, and breast self exam. According to the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) "women who are 50 to 74 years old and are at average risk for breast cancer get a mammogram every two years. Women who are 40 to 49 years old should talk to their doctor or other health care provider about when to start and how often to get a mammogram. Women should weigh the benefits and risks of screening tests when deciding whether to begin getting mammograms before age 50."

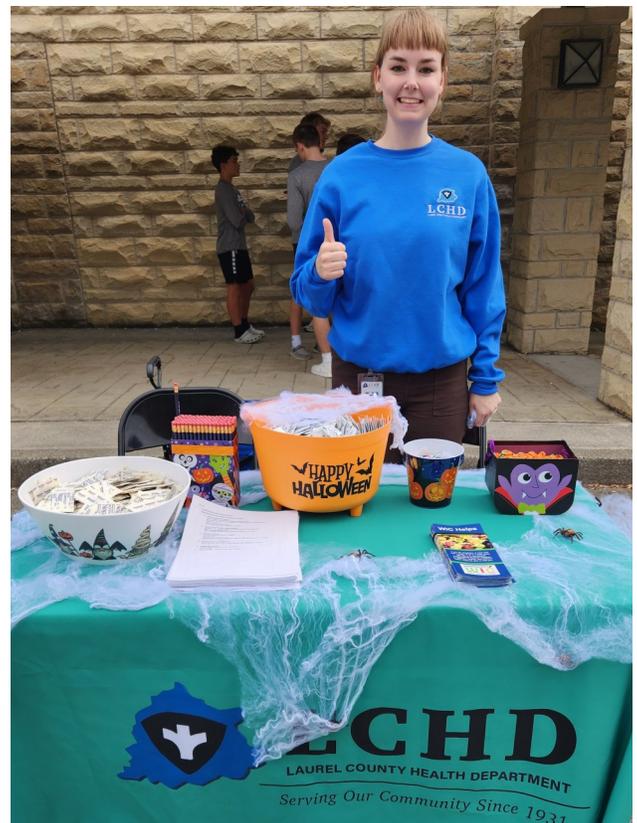
# DEA National Drug Take Back

Laurel County Health Department participated in the National DEA Drug Take Back on Saturday, October 28, 2023. LCHD partnered with Laurel County Agency for Substance Abuse Policy, Operation Unite, London City Police, and KY State Police to collect unused medication at the Laurel County Health Department from 10AM-2PM. During the event a total of 10.2 pounds of unused medication was collected. The event highlighted the importance of proper medication disposal to prevent medication being lost, stolen, or misused.



# LCHD Participates in London Elementary's Trick or Treat Trail

There were plenty of treats offered to students at London Elementary's Trick or Treat Trail on October 27th. Laurel County Health Department participated along with a number of community organizations at the event, passing out treats to London Elementary students to promote a happy (and healthy) Halloween.



Pictured Above: Christi Beaver at the Trick or Treat Trail



# Employee Spotlight

Christi Beaver is the newest addition to the LCHD team. Christi is a 2023 graduate of Eastern Kentucky University, where she received her BS in Public Health. Christi works at LCHD as a Health Educator. As a Health Educator, Christi's job duties include: creating and presenting health education content, distributing information at events, serving as a resource for health information and promoting best practices and healthy behaviors in the community to improve health.



When asked what the best thing about her job, Christi said “finding creative and effective ways to communicate health information and engage with the community” Outside of work , Christi enjoys traveling and going to concerts. Some of Christi's hobbies include reading, crochet, and embroidery. Christi, thank you for your everything you do, we are happy to have you on the team!



## Check out our newly revised website!

**November 7th** LCHD will be closing at 11:30 for Election Day

**November 10th** LCHD will be closed in observance of Veterans Day

**November 23rd and 24th:** LCHD will be closed for Thanksgiving

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