



# LCHD

LAUREL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

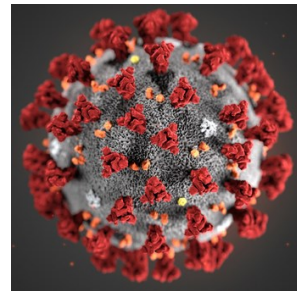
*Serving Our Community Since 1931*

**Laurel County Health Department Volume 6, Issue 5 December 2023**

## Winter Newsletter 2023

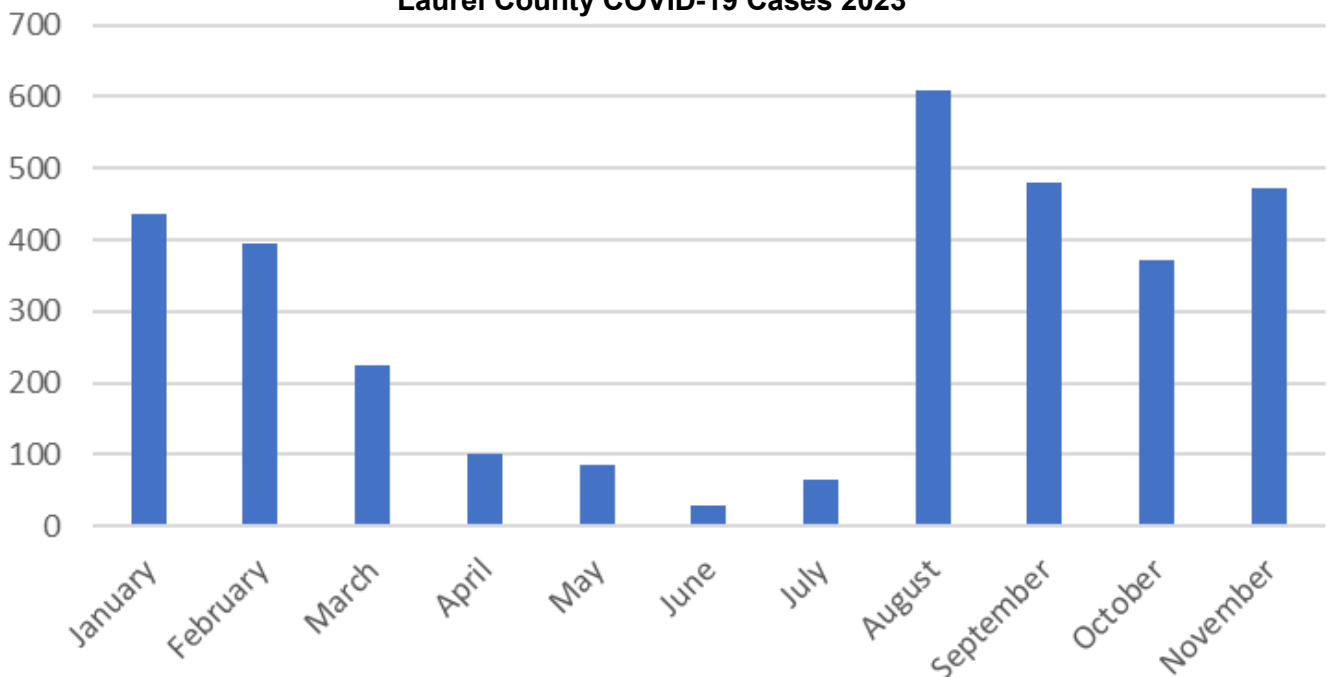
### Laurel County COVID-19 Update

May 11, 2023 marked the end of the national public health emergency for COVID-19, and although the public health emergency is over, LCHD continues to monitor the spread of COVID-19 in the Laurel County community. On December 18th LCHD reported a total of 83 new COVID-19 cases from December 11th to December 15th. As of October 2023 the total number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths for Laurel County is 268.



Looking at laboratory reporting statewide, Kentucky has been seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases since the middle of October. Laurel County has seen a similar trend in positive laboratory tests, with cases increasing in October, plateauing in the middle of November, declining briefly and then beginning to increase again near the end of November.

**Laurel County COVID-19 Cases 2023**



# 2023-2024 Respiratory Virus Season

Fall and winter are when the viruses that cause respiratory disease usually circulate the most heavily. Influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19 are all part of the respiratory virus season. According to the CDC, some seasons are more severe than others, depending on the strains of viruses circulating and our immunity to these viruses. Additionally, the CDC states, one measure of the severity of a season is how many people are sick enough to be hospitalized, because this can stress the healthcare system.



While anyone can get a respiratory virus infection, some people are at higher risk for serious illness. The Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) recommends:

- Stay up to date with vaccines
- Stay home, if sick
- Wash hands often
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Consider wearing a mask if you are high-risk for serious illness

In reference to the 2023-2024 respiratory virus season, CDC estimates that this season will be similar to last year in terms of total hospitalizations from COVID-19, RSV, and flu. Similarly to last year hospitalizations are expected to be higher than what the United States experienced prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the CDC stating “with the addition of a third virus (COVID-19) that can cause severe disease, even an average respiratory season can place significant strain on our healthcare system.”

## **CDC Weekly Viral Respiratory Illness Snapshot (Reported Friday, December 15th, 2023)**

The amount of respiratory illness (fever plus cough or sore throat) causing people to seek healthcare is elevated or increasing across most areas of the country. The U.S. is experiencing elevated RSV activity, particularly among young children. COVID-19 activity remains elevated overall and is increasing in areas like the Midwest. Seasonal influenza activity is elevated and increasing in most parts of the country, with the southeast, south-central and west coast regions of the country reporting the highest levels of activity. Hospital bed occupancy for all patients, including within intensive care units, remains stable nationally.

# Healthy Holidays!

The holidays can be a tricky time to stay on track with eating healthy and staying physically active. With tempting seasonal foods, parties and travel it can be difficult to stick to (or adopt) healthy daily routines. How do you stick to your meal plan when everyone around you seems to be indulging? Here are a few tips from the CDC that can help you have healthy holidays!:



## **Holiday-Proof Your Plan**

- Eat close to your usual times to keep your blood sugar steady. If your meal is served later than normal, eat a small snack at your usual mealtime and eat a little less when dinner is served.
- Invited to a party? Offer to bring a healthy dish along.
- If you have a sweet treat, cut back on other carbs (like potatoes and bread) during the meal.
- Don't skip meals to save up for a feast, you'll be really hungry and more likely to overeat.

## **Outsmart the Buffet**

- When you face a spread of delicious holiday food, make healthy choices easier:
- Have a small plate of the foods you like best and then move away from the buffet table.
- Start with vegetables to take the edge off your appetite.
- Eat slowly. It takes time for your brain to realize you're full. It takes a few minutes for your stomach's "I'm getting full" signal to get to your brain. After finishing your first helping, take a 10-minute break. Make conversation. Drink some water. Then recheck your appetite. You might realize you are full or want only a small portion of seconds.

## **Keep Moving**

You've got a lot on your plate this time of year, and physical activity can get crowded out. But being active is your secret holiday weapon; it can help make up for eating more than usual and reduce stress during this most stressful time of year. Get moving with friends and family, such as taking a walk after a holiday meal.

Each week adults need 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity and 2 days of muscle strengthening activity (carrying groceries, decorations, and heavy presents can count). Remember you can split the time up throughout the week (or throughout the day) and even get creative! Need to do some last minute shopping? Instead of circling the parking lot looking for the perfect parking spot, park farther away to automatically build in some extra steps!

## **Be Flexible and Don't Let a Mistake Derail your Plans**

Consider your health goals for the holiday season, whether it's avoiding overeating, staying active, connecting with others, reducing stress, or preventing weight gain. During the holidays it can help to adopt a flexible mindset. Don't throw your plans out the window if you slip up or don't meet a goal. Instead of saying "The diet starts January 1st", if you slip up, get right back to healthy eating with your next meal!

# Healthy Living with Diabetes

The next Healthy Living with Diabetes 4-week online Zoom series is scheduled to kick off on January 9th. 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?**  
**Jan 9th (9AM-11AM)**  
**Jan 16th (9AM-11AM)**  
**Jan 23rd (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)**

## HANDS Staff Provides Holiday Fun Festivities

On December 4th the Laurel County Health Department classroom was converted into “The North Pole” when HANDS invited program participants to the Laurel County Health Department for Holiday treats and activities. The event gave 8 families the opportunity to make keepsakes, toys, and a take home holiday treats. The staff of Baptist Health Heart and Valve Center Lexington, donated gift baskets to participants which included: smoke detectors, books, sippy cups, spoons, blankets, hats and mittens.



The Kentucky Health Access Nurturing Development Services (HANDS) program is a voluntary home visitation program for any new or expectant parents. HANDS supports families as they build healthy, safe environments for the optimal growth and development of children.



# Behavioral Health 360°

We are excited to announce that in 2024 Laurel County Health Department, in partnership with the Laurel County Health in Motion (HIM) Coalition will be launching Credible Mind-Behavioral Health 360, a free platform that brings together expert driven content in an easy to use location. Think of this web-driven platform as a one-stop shop for mental wellbeing resources.



The need for additional mental health resources in the area was highlighted by the Laurel County community in the 2022 Community Health Assessment. Based on these results, LCHD and Laurel County HIM Coalition, began looking for opportunities to address the need for additional mental health resources. While attending the 2023 NACCHO conference, LCHD staff learned about Credible Mind-Behavioral Health 360, an innovative, online platform that houses an electronic resource library of videos, programs, podcasts, self-help, and more.

This confidential, anonymous, resource will be available to everyone in the Laurel County community 24/7. With Credible Mind-Behavioral Health 360, users can learn new skills, understand their own mental health, take a mental health assessment, and browse the library of thousands of mental wellbeing resources (including available resources in the community).

By signing up, users have access to: past assessment results to track improvement over time, favorited resources, and handpicked Credible Mind-Behavioral Health 360 resources right to their email. No matter what you are going through, Credible Mind-Behavioral Health 360 has science-backed evidence based resources you can trust.

Follow our Facebook page for more information on Credible Mind-Behavioral Health 360, including when and where it can be accessed.



[facebook.com/laurelcohealth/](https://facebook.com/laurelcohealth/)

# COVID-19: An Extra Shot of Protection

The federal Public Health Emergency declaration ended for COVID-19 on May 11, 2023 but that doesn't mean COVID-19 has gone away. Vaccines are an important tool in preventing illness and supporting the health of the community. Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines can keep you from getting sick from a new variant. Currently the CDC recommends everyone 6 months and older get an updated



COVID-19 vaccine to protect against potentially serious COVID-19 outcomes this fall and winter. 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. According to the CDC, here are a few things you should know about COVID-19 vaccines:

## **Updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines save lives and prevent hospitalizations.**

The virus is constantly changing, and our immunity, whether from vaccines or previous infections, fades. Getting updated vaccines continues to be important, especially for older people and those with certain medical conditions.

## **COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective.**

Based on three years of experience with these vaccines, we can expect the vaccines to increase protection and save lives.

## **When side effects from COVID-19 vaccines occur, they are usually mild or moderate.**

COVID-19 vaccines have undergone—and continue to undergo—the most intense vaccine safety monitoring in U.S. history. The reactions that can happen after COVID-19 vaccines are typically mild to moderate and are similar to those that can occur after other vaccines, such as pain at the injection site or fatigue. These reactions usually go away within a few days.

## **Talk to your healthcare provider before you believe everything you see or hear from others.**

A single scientific finding is not conclusive and can be used out of context, or there may be other inaccurate information circulating about COVID-19 vaccines.. The reality is that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. If you have questions or concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine, talk to your healthcare provider.

## **The updated COVID-19 vaccine recommendations are based on data and science.**

Vaccination remains the safest strategy for avoiding hospitalizations, long-term health outcomes, and death. Visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) or call 1-800-232-0233 to find a COVID-19 vaccine near you.

Laurel County Health Department currently administers the Moderna monovalent COVID-19 vaccine utilizing same day scheduling to set up appointments.

# Employee Spotlight

Lynnett Renner began working at Laurel County Health Department in 2017 after retiring from Cumberland Valley District Health Department in 2015 with 29.5 years of service. Lynnett currently serves as Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Coordinator and Diabetes Coordinator as well as a Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) Nutritionist. Lynnett holds a Bachelor of Science degree for Dietetics at Berea College, and Master of Science degree for Community Nutrition at Eastern Kentucky University



Lynnett's job responsibilities include: implementing the Healthy Living With Diabetes (HLWD) Program and coordinating with the Laurel County MCH programs. Lynnett also participates in initiatives with the Laurel County Child Fatality Review and works with community partners to increase access to medication lock boxes, create safe plans of care for women who are in addiction recovery and have infants diagnosed with NAS, and promote increased access to healthy foods and increased physical activity.

When asked what the best thing about her job is, Lynnett said "I love public health! Health prevention should be something everyone in the health system works toward. It is exciting to engage the community, both clinical and community-based providers, and individuals to not only identify what kind of health problems that we want to prioritize to work on but also planning, implementing programs, and evaluating what works." Outside of work Lynnett enjoys spending time with her family and grandkids, traveling, hiking and just being outside enjoying God's creation. When asked about interesting hobbies, Lynnett revealed she is 6 states away from meeting her goal to travel to all 50 states! Lynnett, thank you for everything you do, we're glad to have you at LCHD!



**December 25th-26th** LCHD will be closed in observance of Christmas.

**December 29th and January 1st** LCHD will be closed in observance of the New Year

**January 15th:** LCHD will be closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day

[Laurelcohealthdept.org](http://Laurelcohealthdept.org)

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