

Montgomery County Health Officer Update – August 2024

Hello all,

It's officially Back to School Season! I hope everyone had a safe, enjoyable and rewarding summer break and is ready for the school year ahead.

Immunization

August is Immunization Awareness Month! As we prepare to head into a new school year, I think it is critical for me to remind us of the importance of administering vaccines as a key public health intervention in community settings like schools, to reduce the risk of disease spread and serious illness. As a way to reduce potential barriers to access, the Department of Health and Human Services provides free vaccinations for school-aged children who are missing any required school vaccines.

Commission on Public Health: Public Listening Session

We are pleased to share that the Maryland's Commission on Public Health visit with us, on Tuesday, July 30th was well received! The commission was extremely impressed by the presentation as well as the fantastic work that the being done by the DHHS to improve the health of Montgomery County residents. There was also an opportunity for community members to share their thoughts and offer ideas related to public health improvements with the commission. You can watch the recording of the listening session [here](#). Also, while the event itself has passed, if interested, residents still have an opportunity to share their thoughts and comments. You are encouraged to submit written comments using the form [here](#), and you can also contact the commission via email at MD.CoPH@maryland.gov.

COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Viruses Update

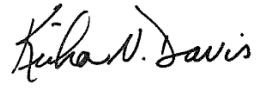
We continue to monitor COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses in the County. We note that COVID-19 transmissions continued to rise during this year's summer wave, and we are now seeing significant increases in more serious illness resulting in hospitalizations. Recent numbers show that our hospitals have an increased number of total patients with a COVID-19 diagnosis, since the end of January. The KP.3.1.1 variant is the more dominant variant at this time however, the CDC anticipates that the currently available treatments and vaccines for COVID-19 will continue to be effective. We want to encourage parents and students to get vaccinated, boosted and remember the non-pharmacological interventions to reduce transmission i.e., handwashing, isolating when ill, cover coughs and sneezes, etc., as we head into a new school year.

As we plan for the fall, our focus will be on vulnerable populations, especially the elderly and those in congregate settings. We are working with nursing homes to increase vaccination rates among staff and residents and will partner with community groups to educate and vaccinate the most vulnerable residents. Additionally, the CDC has provided updated recommendations of the administration of a single dose of the vaccine for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) for adults 60-74 years who are at increased risk and for all adults 75+ years.

Vaccination recommendations for COVID-19 and influenza are as follows:

- **Anyone age 6 months and up** should receive an updated Flu vaccine when it becomes available.
- **Anyone age 6 months and up** should receive an updated COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available.

Wishing everyone a fun and productive school year! Thanks for your commitment to making our community a healthier, happier place to live, work, and play!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kisha N. Davis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Kisha N. Davis, MD, MPH, FAAFP