CLEVELAND COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER

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Cleveland County Experiencing Increase in COVID-19 Cases
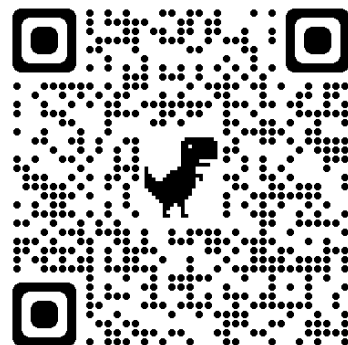*Health Officials Encourage Vaccination and Testing*

SHELBY, NC – Cleveland County is currently experiencing an increase in COVID-19 cases, largely due to the highly contagious Omicron subvariant BA.5 now taking over as the dominant variant in the United States, including North Carolina. While this variant so far does not appear to cause as severe of illness as its predecessors, the County is nonetheless experiencing an increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations, with thirteen Cleveland County residents currently hospitalized from COVID-19.

The Cleveland County Health Department would like to remind everyone to take appropriate steps to protect yourself and others, especially those who are at higher risk for severe illness such as individuals 65 and older and those with underlying health conditions.

Getting vaccinated is the most effective way to protect from severe illness, hospitalization, and death. COVID-19 vaccines are now available for everyone six months and older. If you have already received your COVID-19 vaccine, stay up to date by getting boosted when eligible. Visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html or scan the QR code to learn more about when you and your family are eligible for the booster.

Get tested if you feel sick or have been exposed to COVID-19.

"Identifying COVID-19 infection and isolating when positive is critical in helping to prevent the continued spread of the virus," Cleveland County Deputy Health Director Deshay Oliver said. "Common symptoms we are seeing with BA.5 include fever, headache, sore throat, runny nose, congestion, and tiredness. These symptoms can be mistaken for a common cold or even allergies. If people experience any symptoms, it is important to get tested."

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Many sites including the health department, CVS, and Walgreens continue to offer COVID-19 testing. At-home COVID tests are also widely available.

"The Cleveland County Health Department is distributing free at-home COVID-19 tests Monday – Friday from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm while supplies last," Oliver added. You must be at least 14 years old to pick up and can receive up to 10 free tests per household per day."

To learn more about testing options and treatment, visit www.covid19.ncdhhs.gov/find-covid-19-tests/faqs.

For an extra layer of protection, **wear a well-fitting mask**. This is particularly helpful if you are at high risk for severe illness or if you will be at a large event or crowded setting where physical distancing isn't possible. **Frequent handwashing** and **disinfection of high-touch surfaces** also continue to be good preventive practices.

To schedule an appointment for the COVID-19 vaccine or testing at the Cleveland County Health Department, please call our COVID-19 helpline at 980-484-6019. For weekly updates on current COVID-19 metrics, you may visit the Cleveland County Health Department's website at www.clevelandcountyhdnc.com or the NCDHHS COVID-19 dashboard at www.covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard.

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