MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Booster doses offer protection against omicron variant

Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) is responding to the urgent threat of the omicron variant of COVID-19 and the recent spike in local cases. Getting a booster dose of the vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and others from infection.

"Two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine are not shown to provide much protection against infection from the omicron variant, however, a booster dose does," says Dr. Kit Young Hoon, Medical Officer of Health at NWHU. "Having two doses still provides good protection against hospitalization; however, the new variant is highly contagious, and it won't take many serious cases to overwhelm our health care system locally," warns Dr. Young Hoon.

In response, NWHU is increasing the number of vaccine clinics being offered. "I want to thank staff who have stepped up to make these clinics possible. It required cancelling well-deserved vacation for many, which shows the incredible dedication of our staff and volunteers," says Dr. Young Hoon. Individuals can receive either Pfizer or Moderna for a booster dose and NWHU will aim to provide the same vaccine as dose two, when available. "Accept the brand of the vaccine for your booster that is offered to you. Mixing vaccine brands between second and third doses does not impact safety or effectiveness," says Dr. Young Hoon.

Starting December 20, 2021, booster doses are available to anyone aged 18 or older (born in 2003 or earlier) if their second dose was at least 12 weeks (84 days) ago.

Anyone who qualifies for a booster dose of the vaccine should make an appointment at: https://clinicreservation.com/book-now/northwestern-health-unit or by calling 1-866-468-2240. More clinics are being added to the booking system over the next few days. Vaccines are also available from some pharmacies and health care providers.

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