

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM. I'm Jim Burke, with local news for Jefferson and Clallam counties for Tuesday, December 20, 2022.

This afternoon, the city of PT is having an Envision Golf Course and Mountain View Commons Stakeholder meeting at 3:30pm. This will be an all-virtual meeting due to the inclement weather. You can go to <https://cityofpt.us/engagept/page/envision-golf-course-and-mt-view-commons-stakeholder-meeting-virtual-only> and click on the Zoom link there so you can join the meeting and watch what's going on.

A Winter Storm Warning for Jefferson County is in effect until tomorrow at 4am. Jefferson County residents can expect snow throughout this evening and extremely cold temperatures through the end of the week. Exact snowfall amounts and temperatures will vary by location, with heavier amounts near the Hood Canal area, as well as west of Jefferson County along 101 between Sequim and Port Angeles. Drivers should exercise extreme caution when traveling and should also consider deferring unnecessary travel if at all possible. Snowfall last night and this morning may cause adverse traffic conditions, as can ice while temperatures remain near freezing or below through Friday.

Yesterday, KPTZ aired a health report to the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners from Dr. Allison Berry, chief health officer for Jefferson and Clallam Counties. Director of Emergency Management Willie Bence was also in attendance. In Jefferson County, the two-week COVID-19 case rate last week was 451 but is now 398 per 100,000 people. Two people are currently hospitalized. 73 new cases were added this week for a total of 6,536 cases.

Dr. Berry said three viruses are still challenging our community, that nationally COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are on the rise, and 400 people are dying from COVID-19 every day across the U.S. Statewide, there is also a rise in cases, but she said in Jefferson County case rates are relatively flat. In Clallam County there IS a rise with 6 people currently hospitalized with COVID-19.

Influenza is being reported at a 33% rate in testing, which is high, and there is a high presentation of cases in hospitals and clinics, but she says they might be seeing a plateau in flu cases. 40 people have died due to influenza in Washington State this season.

In terms of RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), Dr. Berry said we are seeing a plateau and even a drop in RSV cases in the central Puget Sound. This is freeing up some pediatric bed space in the major hospitals there, which is making it possible to transfer more severely ill young patients to children's hospitals in the I-5 corridor.

She feels we could see a downtrend on all three viruses soon, but she said, "It all depends on US!" "The biggest thing for all three of these is to wear a mask indoors. It does reduce transmission of Covid, RSV, and flu. For flu and Covid, there are highly effective vaccines available that can reduce your likelihood of getting infected with the virus and spreading it to others, and dramatically reduce your risk of getting severely ill. The COVID-19 bivalent boosters are available to anyone 6 months and up, so if it's been more than 2 months since your kiddoes got their vaccines, we recommend moving forward with the bivalent booster. Flu vaccines are also available for anyone 6 months and older. And last, but not least, staying home when you are sick is really critical.

One of the challenges we are facing is that we're trying to fight pandemic-level illness within the context of the American healthcare system, which is a for-profit system, highly siloed and not coordinated. We are facing the reality of what that looks like right now. We see running out of medications, we see running out of pediatric hospital beds, which is absolutely part of the breakdown of that healthcare system. In the meantime, I'd still like to encourage folks to get their vaccines. Generally, there is still a lot more to do to make sure there is adequate access to masks. We still do have masks available at Jefferson County Public Health, but it is mostly surgical masks.

In January, the public health briefings will go to two per month, but because of two Monday holidays, they will be on two Tuesdays, January 3 and January 17, 2023, on Chris Bricker's show, *Morning on the Salish*.

Submit your Public Health questions to Dr. Allison Berry and Willie Bence by emailing contactus@kptz.org by Friday December 30 at noon, to be answered the following Tuesday, January 3. You can still order Home Covid tests from: <https://www.sayyescovidhometest.org/>.

On Monday, January 2, there will be a special *Attention Please!* Show that will feature an interview with Congressman Derek Kilmer.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening!