January 21, 2024

**LOTS OF COVID REMAINS THIS WINTER…
IN FACT MAY BE AS ACTIVE AS WE'VE EVER SEEN…… IN THE VALLEY. ALL DOING WELL BUT BE PROACTIVE TO PREVENT NEED FOR HOSPITALIZATION.**

- **COVID IS VERY HIGH RIGHT NOW. DO NOT GO OUT WITH GROUPS OF PEOPLE IF YOU ARE SICK AND HAVE NOT TESTED FOR COVID….YOU MAY HAVE COVID AND BE SPREADING IT!**

- **WEAR A MASK DURING TRAVEL IN THE AIRPORT AND ON THE AIRPLANE (UNTIL 10,000 FEET)…. AT THIS TIME DUE TO HIGH LEVELS OF COVID INFECTION. ONCE THE SURGE HAS DROPPED OFF, THIS IS NOT AS ESSENTIAL.**

- **GET BOOSTED IF YOU HAVE NOT DONE SO…PARTICULARLY OVER AGE 65.**

- **FLU IS STILL AT HIGH LEVELS…WE ARE IN THE HEART OF THE FLU SEASON….. GET YOUR FLU SHOT IF YOU'VE NOT ALREADY HAD IT**

- **VERY LITTLE RSV IN THE VALLEY.. BUT RISING.**

IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A COLD OR RESPIRATORY INFECTION RIGHT NOW…. YOU MAY WELL HAVE COVID OR THE FLU. PLEASE DO A COVID TEST TO CHECK AT HOME. AVOID GOING TO HOLIDAY PARTIES IF YOU ARE SICK AND HAVE NOT CHECKED FOR COVID.

ALMOST ALL DOING WELL, BUT WE ARE SEEING A FEW PEOPLE NEED THE HOSPITAL TO RECOVER.

FLU TESTING CAN BE DONE IF YOU ARE FEELING PARTICULARLY SICK WITH YOUR UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION.

THE NEW COVID VACCINE IS AVAILABLE.

IT IS KEEPING PEOPLE FROM HAVING A MORE DIFFICULT TIME WITH INFECTION AND KEEPING PEOPLE OUT OF THE HOSPITAL.

I RECOMMEND THE COVID BOOSTER GENERALLY FOR THOSE OVER 65. BUT……

- **I HIGHLY RECOMMEND A BOOSTER FOR THOSE 80 & OLDER.**

- **I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THE BOOSTER FOR THOSE OVER 65 WITH HEART FAILURE, SIGNIFICANT LUNG CONDITIONS, AND DIABETES.**

CONSIDER BOOSTING WITH THE NEW COVID VACCINE TO REDUCE RISK OF COVID AND TO REDUCE COVID SYMPTOM SEVERITY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON.

TIMING OF VACCINATIONS THIS FALL AND WINTER:

- **FLU SHOT**
- **COVID SHOT**
- **RSV SHOT**

DO NOT GET ALL SHOTS AT THE SAME TIME. RSV SHOULD BE TAKEN ALONE.
IF YOU WISH, YOU CAN GET FLU AND COVID AT THE SAME TIME. THAT IS PROVEN SAFE AND EFFECTIVE.

IF YOU ARE GETTING MULTIPLE SHOTS, PLEASE GIVE 2 WEEKS BETWEEN SHOTS

FLU SHOT:
WHO SHOULD GET IT: RECOMMEND IT FOR EVERYONE OVER 65 AND FOR ANYONE OF ANY AGE WHO DOES NOT WANT TO GET THE FLU.

TIMING: GET YOUR FLU SHOT NOW THROUGH MID NOVEMBER.

FLU SEASON WAS EARLY LAST YEAR, BUT TYPICALLY BEGINS IN EARNEST AROUND THANKSGIVING IN ARIZONA. IT TAKES 2-3 WEEKS FOR THE FLU SHOT TO BE FULLY EFFECTIVE.

COVID SHOT:
NEW COVID IS AVAILABLE NOW…. GET IT NOW!
(It is at the pharmacies…our office does not carry this vaccine.)

WHO SHOULD GET IT:
<u>IF YOU HAVE NOT HAD COVID YET</u> AND ARE OVER 65, I RECOMMEND YOU STAY CURRENT WITH THE LATEST VERSION OF THE VACCINE. GET THE LATEST VACCINE WHEN AVAILABLE.

<u>IF YOU HAVE HAD COVID</u>, YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL PROTECTION AGAINST FUTURE INFECTION, BUT IS NOT A GUARANTEE.

I WOULD MAKE SURE YOU HAVE HAD A COVID SHOT DURING THE 2023 CALENDAR YEAR FOR THOSE OVER 65 WHO HAVE ADDITIONAL RISK DUE TO HEALTH ISSUES SUCH AS: ACTIVELY TREATED HEART FAILURE, LUNG DISEASE, OR DIABETES.

WHEN TO GET THE COVID VACCINE:

GET IT RIGHT NOW

RSV VACCINE:
THIS IS A NEW VACCINE THAT IS AVAILABLE FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR.
(It is at the pharmacies… our office does not carry this vaccine.)

WHO SHOULD GET IT:

I DO NOT RECOMMEND IT FOR EVERYONE DURING THIS FIRST CALENDAR YEAR OF AVAILABILITY.
I DO THINK PEOPLE AT HIGHER RISK SHOULD CONSIDER GETTING THE RSV VACCINE THIS YEAR IF THEY ARE INCLINED…BUT DON'T FEEL OBLIGATED.

FOR THOSE OVER 65 WHO HAVE ADDITIONAL RISK FOR SERIOUS ILLNESS AS A RESULT OF HEALTH ISSUES SUCH AS: ACTIVELY TREATED HEART FAILURE, CANCER, LUNG DISEASE, OR DIABETES.

THERE ARE TWO VERSIONS, BOTH SIMILAR, AND THERE IS NO SPECIFIC REASON TO CHOOSE ONE OVER THE OTHER (ONE IS GSK..MAKERS OF SHINGRIX, THE OTHER IF PFIZER…MAKERS OF THE COVID VACCINE)

GETTING THE VACCINE THIS YEAR IS ELECTIVE. I AM NOT BROADLY RECOMMENDING IT. SEE BELOW FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS.

WHEN TO GET RSV VACCINE:

GET IT ANYTIME…STARTING NOW…THROUGH THE FEBRUARY.

COVID:
THE 5TH COVID BOOSTER IS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE OVER 65 OR THOSE WHO ARE YOUNGER AND HAVE COMPROMISED IMMUNE SYSTEMS.

CONSIDER GETTING AN ADDITIONAL BOOSTER NOW IF:

YOU ARE OVER 65 AND HAVE NOT HAD COVID

YOU ARE AT HIGHER RISK DUE TO ILLNESS/MEDICATION (ANY AGE) AND HAVE NOT HAD COVID.

IF YOU HAVE HAD COVID OVER 4 MONTHS AGO AND WISH TO BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY.

YOU ARE TRAVELING EXTENSIVELY IN THE NEXT 6 MONTHS OR ARE GOING TO LARGE FAMILY EVENTS.

IF YOU HAVE NOT HAD COVID AND NOT HAD 5 SHOTS….AND ARE OVER 65…THE DATA IS COMPELLING THAT ADDITIONAL SHOTS WILL KEEP YOU OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS.

IF GOOD VENTILATION, OPEN SPACES….NO NEED TO MASK AS A GENERAL RULE.
CONSIDER WEARING A GOOD MASK (KN95 OR N95) SELECTIVELY AT BUSY INDOOR LOCATIONS TO STAY HEALTHY …ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE NOT HAD COVID.
LIVE YOUR LIFE AND GO OUT AND ABOUT AS YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE…… AND YOU SHOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE DOING SO.

HOW TO MANAGE AT THIS TIME FOR GATHERINGS:

PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE COMFORTABLE GETTING TOGETHER AND THEY SHOULD GET TOGETHER.

TO REDUCE RISK....HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO CONSIDER:

GET YOUR COVID BOOSTER

DO NOT ATTEND GATHERINGS IF YOU ARE NOT FEELING WELL. ASK OTHERS NOT TO ATTEND IF THEY ARE NOT FEELING WELL.

KEEP AIR MOVING IN GATHERING AREAS. VENTILATION...BY NATURAL MEANS OUTDOORS OR WITH FANS, CAN BE HELPFUL.

WEARING A HIGH-QUALITY MASK AT GATHERINGS IS GOOD IF YOU ARE TRAVELING AND WISH TO AVOID INFECTION FOR TRAVEL. IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR THOSE

WITH TRULY REDUCED IMMUNITY...THOSE RECEIVING CHEMOTHERAPY, THOSE WITH SEVERE LUNG DISEASE, AND THOSE RECOVERING FROM RECENT HOSPITALIZATION.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

WEAR N-95 OR KN95 MASKS IN SITUATIONS THAT YOU FEEL ARE HIGHER EXPOSURE IF YOU WISH TO REDUCE YOUR RISK

WHEN GOING OUT TO ACTIVITIES…. SELECT OPTIONS THAT ALLOW FOR BETTER VENTILATION INSIDE, OR CHOOSE OUTSIDE OPTIONS

IF YOU GET SICK YOU NEED TO TEST FOR COVID. CONSIDER COMING INTO THE OFFICE PARKING LOT FOR FLU TESTING AS WELL

TREATMENT FOR COVID AND FOR FLU IS AVAILABLE AND WORTHWHILE IN MANY INSTANCES.
TREATMENT FOR RSV IS PURELY SYMPTOMATIC…. WE TREAT THE SYMPTOMS AS THERE IS NO ANTIVIRAL FOR RSV

COVID IS UNDER CONTROL ON A BROAD BASIS
RISKS OF COMPLICATIONS ARE LOW FOR THE MULTI-VAXXED

BOOSTER COVID VACCINATIONS:
THE NEW COVID VACCINE IS BIVALENT…. THIS MEANS IT CONTAINS THE ORIGINAL VACCINE COVERAGE…. PLUS, COVERAGE MORE SPECIFICALLY FOR BA5 FORMS OF COVID.

GIVEN THE SAFETY OF THE VACCINE, IT IS BEST FOR EVERY ADULT TO CONSIDER THIS BOOSTER…BUT….

<u>I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THE BOOSTER VACCINE IF:</u>

YOU HAVE NOT HAD COVID AND ARE OVER 65 YEARS OLD

YOU HAVE NOT HAD COVID AND HAVE HEALTH ISSUES THAT MAKE YOU MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO COVID COMPLICATIONS SUCH AS…. EMPHYSEMA, SIGNIFICANT DIABETES, HEART FAILURE, OR ARE ON IMMUNE SUPPRESSING MEDICATION.

IF YOU HAD COVID YOU CAN STILL BENEFIT FROM ANOTHER BOOSTER, BUT IT IS NOT AS ESSENTIAL, AS YOUR PREVIOUS COVID INFECTION DOES HELP BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY THROUGH NATURAL MEANS.

IF YOU HAVE HAD 5 COVID VACCINES, THE 6TH VACCINE IS NOT AS ESSENTIAL, BUT IT WILL PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PROTECTION AND IS WORTH STRONGLY CONSIDERING.

REMEMBER, IF YOU GET COVID WE CAN ALWAYS TREAT YOU WITH PAXLOVID PILLS, THEY ARE EFFECTIVE.

GET YOUR COVID BOOSTER AND GET YOUR FLU BOOSTER

COVID BOOSTER IS FULLY EFFECTIVE IN 1 WEEK
FLU IS FULLY EFFECTIVE IN 3 WEEKS

MANY WHO HAVE AVOIDED COVID ARE NOW GETTING INFECTED DESPITE ALL OF THEIR EFFORTS.

PAXLOVID ANTI-VIRAL PILLS ARE WIDELY AVAILABLE…. BUT MOST PEOPLE DO NOT REQUIRE MEDICATION TO TREAT THEIR CASE OF COVID.

PLEASE LIVE LIFE, BEING CAREFUL IN WAYS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE, BUT DO NOT RESTRICT YOUR ACTIVITIES.
WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION, BUT AT THIS TIME, IN THE USA FOR THE MULTI-VACCINATED, WE HAVE REACHED OUR ENDPOINT.

FOR THE UNVACCINATED…. KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD…. COVID CONTINUES TO BE AN ISSUE.
THE CURRENT VARIANT IS MUCH MILDER, BUT THERE ARE CONCERNS FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT VACCINATED. WE ARE TREATING NEARLY ALL THE UNVACCINATED THAT GET COVID.

IF YOU HAVE SIGNIFICANT RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS, PRESUME THIS IS COVID AND PROTECT OTHERS!!!

PAXLOVID PILLS AVAILABLE FOR ALL BUT ARE ONLY NECESSARY FOR THOSE WITH CHALLENGING SYMPTOMS IN THE FIRST 5 DAYS OR THOSE AT HIGH RISK FOR COMPLICATIONS FROM BREAKTHROUGH COVID.

I RECOMMEND THE BOOSTER GENERALLY, WITH THESE SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

DO GET THE BOOSTER IF:

- **YOU HAD 4 SHOTS AND DID WELL WITH THEM, YOU SHOULD DO WELL WITH THE 5TH SHOT.**
- **IF YOU DID NOT GET BREAKTHROUGH COVID YET.**
- **THE OLDER YOU ARE THE MORE BENEFICIAL THE 5TH COVID SHOT. FOR 70 AND ABOVE THE SHOT IS DEFINITELY QUITE USEFUL. UNDER THAT AGE IT'S LESS BENEFICIAL AND UP TO YOU PERSONALLY IF YOU WANT THE SHOT.**
- **DO STAY WITH THE SAME SHOT. IF YOU HAVE BEEN GETTING PFIZER…STAY WITH PFIZER. IF YOU HAVE BEEN GETTING MODERNA…STAY WITH MODERNA.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MASKING WHEN TRAVELLING IS A PERSONAL DECISION.

- **DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF IF OTHERS ARE MASKING. IF YOU WEAR A HIGH-QUALITY MASK YOU ARE INCREASING YOUR PROTECTION AND DECREASING YOUR RISK.**
- **I DO RECOMMEND WEARING A KN95 OR N95 IN THE AIRPORT TERMINAL WHERE EXPOSURE IS GREATEST.**

- **ON THE AIRPLANE, WHEN THE ENGINES ARE FULLY ON, THE AIR IS BEING HIGHLY FILTERED AND EXPOSURE IS MUCH LESS. WEARING AN EXCELLENT MASK WILL REDUCE YOUR RISK DURING FLIGHT, BUT IT IS UP TO YOU IF YOU WISH TO USE THE MASK AT THAT TIME.**

GUIDELINES IF YOU GET BREAKTHROUGH COVID:
https://doctordoug.com/2022/01/10/i-have-covidwhat-do-i-do/

COVID TESTING WITH AT HOME TESTS (ANTIGEN TESTS) ARE GENERALLY ACCURATE AND THEY ARE USEFUL. BUT A NEGATIVE TEST IN THE SETTING OF CLASSIC SYMPTOMS…. IS LIKELY A FALSE RESULT.
DO A PCR TEST TO CROSS CHECK OR IF YOU HAVE CLASSIC COVID SYMPTOMS, OR YOU MAY 'HOLD ON ADDITIONAL TESTING' AND PRESUME YOU HAVE COVID AND FOLLOW PRACTICES FOR THOSE WITH COVID.

5 DAYS OF QUARANTINE AND 5 DAYS OF MASKING IS THE PLAN FOR ALL COVID POSITIVE PATIENTS WHO HAVE BEEN VACCINATED.

PAXLOVID (PFIZER PILL FOR COVID) & MOLNUPIRAVIR (MERCK PILL) ARE AVAILABLE BUT RECOMMENDED ONLY FOR THOSE AT PARTICULARLY HIGH RISK OF COMPLICATIONS (IMMUNE SUPPRESSED OR UNVACCINATED).

HOW DO I GET TESTED FOR POSSIBLE ACTIVE COVID INFECTION?

TESTING CAN BE DONE AT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE CITY OR BY A SELF-TEST FROM YOUR LOCAL PHARMACY.

https://doctordoug.com/2020/11/22/covid-19-testing-sites/

YOU MAY PURCHASE A HOME TEST KIT FROM AMAZON OR YOU CAN GET SIMILAR KITS AT WALGREENS OR CVS OR YOUR LOCAL PHARMACY.
I THINK IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO HAVE A HOME KIT FOR SELF-TESTING AT HOME. IT IS LIKELY YOU WILL USE IT BY THE END OF WINTER.

RECOMMENDED HOME TEST KITS FROM AMAZON ARE:

- **iHealth COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test**
- **Quidel QuickVue at-Home OTC COVID-19**

https://www.amazon.com/iHealth-COVID-19-Authorized-Non-invasive-Discomfort/dp/B09KZ6TBNY/ref=sr_1_1_sspa?crid=1QISNYIENRKEO&keywords=ihealth+covid-19+antigen+rapid+test&qid=1655045654&sprefix=ihealth%2Caps%2C169&sr=8-1-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUExNUkwMFdSWlNQTVQwJmVuY3J5cHRlZElkPUEwMzc1MzMzMzBUUjJUSVg4UFA5UyZlbmNyeXB0ZWRBZElkPUEwNDQ5MzI4MzNBOTdXUk9TSk5FMiZ3aWRnZXROYW1lPXNwX2F0ZiZhY3Rpb249Y2xpY2tSZWRpcmVjdCZkb05vdExvZ0NsaWNrPXRydWU=

https://www.amazon.com/Quidel-QuickVue-at-Home-COVID-19-Test/dp/B093NBTF75/ref=sr_1_3?crid=25COAA6CR9FBY&dchild=1&keywords=rapid+covid+testing+kit+for+home&qid=1630678185&sprefix=rapid+covid+test%2Caps%2C241&sr=8-3

TESTING LOCATIONS CAN ALSO BE FOUND HERE:

https://doctordoug.com/2020/11/22/covid-19-testing-sites/

YOU CAN SEE DAILY TRENDS FOR ARIZONA AND THE U.S. HERE, ON THE CDC WEBSITE…JUST CHOOSE 'ARIZONA' FROM THE LIST.
https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_dailytrends

To monitor the course of COVID in Maricopa County, go to: https://covidactnow.org

LOCATIONS FOR COVID TESTING OTHER THAN OUR OFFICE…SEE OUR UPDATED LIST:

https://doctordoug.com/2020/06/30/covid-19-testing-sites/

LATE NIGHT TESTING AT NEXT CARE FACILITIES IS A CONSIDERATION. HERE IS THE LINK: https://nextcare.com/curbside/

Know that our office is responding to COVID, and we are here to help. Reach out for assistance if you are not feeling well. We will develop a plan of action for you to move forward.

Yours in good health,
Dr. Lakin