



Happy Holidays from all of us at the  
Union County Health Department!  
We wish each of you a joyful end of the year!



**Medicare Open Enrollment Ends Soon - Make Sure Your Doctors & Prescriptions are Covered**

The annual Medicare open enrollment period ends Saturday, Dec. 7. The open enrollment period is the time each year when current Medicare members can change their Medicare plan coverage for the upcoming year. It is important to review your current Medicare or Medicare Advantage plan and make sure it still fits your needs - including covering your doctors and prescriptions. What doctors, hospitals and medical facilities are in-network can change year to year. For example, OSU and Anthem announced at the end of November 2024 that the OSU health systems, including the Wexner medical center and the James Comprehensive Cancer Center, will no longer be in-network providers for people with Anthem Medicare Advantage plans beginning Jan. 1, 2025. If you need help reviewing your Medicare plan options, use the free online tool from [www.medicare.gov/](http://www.medicare.gov/), call the Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program at 800-686-1578, call Union County Senior Services at 937-644-1010, or call the Union County Health Department at 937-642-2053.

**Holiday COVID Test Kit Distribution - Dec. 13**

In advance of the holidays, the Union County Health Department is offering a free COVID test kit distribution on Friday, Dec. 13. Reserve your kits online at [unioncountycovid.org/testing/](http://unioncountycovid.org/testing/) and pick up on Dec. 13 from 8am-4pm at the Health Department. You can reserve as many kits as you need for your holiday season\*. Test kits come 2 kits per box. Test kits may have a limited expiration date, so we encourage you to order based on your holiday needs. You can pick up kits for multiple households. If you can't make it on Dec. 13, just let us know and stop by Monday through Friday from 8am-4pm and pick up test kits at your convenience.

\* We reserve the right to implement a limit should demand exceed supply.

**Increasing Respiratory Virus Activity**

Ohio has seen an increase in reported outbreaks of pneumonia, mostly in school and childcare settings. This increase in pneumonia activity is consistent with national trends over the past six months. Ohio is also seeing cases of pertussis increase to pre-pandemic. Nationally, the number of reported pertussis cases in 2024 is higher than the same time period in 2019 prior to the pandemic. Ohio is currently experiencing low influenza-like illness activity and moderate overall respiratory illness activity. However, based on historical trend data, we anticipate respiratory virus activity to increase in the coming weeks or months.

As we head into the winter respiratory virus season, please remember the CDC's 5 core prevention strategies:

- **Vaccinate** - stay up-to-date on vaccines, including flu, COVID, RSV and pertussis
- **Hygiene** - wash hands often and for 20 seconds; cover coughs and sneezes with a sleeve; clean high-touch surfaces like door knobs and light switches
- **Clean Air** - bring fresh air into your home/work; if you have a central heater, air conditioner or ventilation system, turn the fan to the "on" position when you have visitors, use pleated filters and change filters every 3 months; use a portable HEPA air purifier; or move your gathering outside
- **Stay Home When Sick** - Stay home (and away from others in your home who aren't sick) until at least 24 hours after your symptoms are getting better AND at least 24 hours since you've had any fever (this should be fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication); Once a day has passed since you've last had a fever and since you started feeling better, use caution around others for the next five days. It is especially important to use precautions (like social distancing, outdoor meeting, and/or masking) if you must be around anyone who is at high risk for severe complications for a respiratory illness.
- **Treatment** - Talk to your doctor right away about treatment options if you are a person at high risk for severe complications from respiratory illnesses.

**Experience the Holiday Magic in Union County**

Staying connected and doing things that bring you joy and fulfillment are important for overall health. So this holiday, venture out and find some holiday magic close to home. Our friends at Union County Tourism have compiled great holiday memory making ideas. From Merry and Bright Bridges to watching National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation at the Avalon, there is much to do. Check out all the holiday events or create a childlike Christmas itinerary at [Union County Tourism](http://Union County Tourism).

