



INDIANA DISTRICT 2

HOSPITAL PREPAREDNESS PLANNING COMMITTEE, INC.

David McGuire Chair | Zach Roberts 1st Vice Chair | Lydia Spencer 2nd Vice Chair/PHEPCA Rep

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November 30, 2021

An Open Letter to District 2 Community Members:

Nearly every hospital in our region has reached capacity or is exceeding capacity, which means we consistently have more patients than beds. Cases of COVID-19 have been increasing during the last several weeks. Most of these patients have not been vaccinated. Our already busy emergency departments are now overwhelmed.

How are you affected?

- You may have a much longer than usual wait for emergency care.
- You may have a prolonged stay in the emergency department waiting for a hospital bed.
- Certain surgeries or procedures may be postponed.
- Visitor restrictions and mask mandates will remain in effect in our healthcare settings.

You may have thought things would get back to normal. They haven't. You may have thought the worst was over. It isn't. We implore the community, *now* is the time to stop the dangerous path we are on.

The strain on our hospitals affects our ability to care for you if you are seriously injured in an accident, suffer a heart attack or stroke, or experience another medical emergency. We frequently must divert all but the most critical patients to the next nearest accepting facility, which can be miles away. We are challenged to discharge patients to skilled nursing homes because of the staffing shortages that are impacting the entire healthcare industry.

After nearly two years of caring for patients during the pandemic, our healthcare workers are stressed and exhausted. Many are sad and frustrated by so much preventable loss.

When vaccinated patients contract COVID, they typically are not as sick and do not require hospitalization, or they have a much shorter stay.

Hospitals here and across the country are starting to see an increase in respiratory illness and flu. Health experts are keeping a close eye on the new Omicron variant and emphasizing how it is more important than ever that we remain vigilant and follow these public health recommendations:

- Get vaccinated. Get boosted.
- Choose the right level of care. Seek emergency care for life-threatening conditions or severe injuries.
- Mask when indoors, or whenever you are unable to socially distance.
- Wash your hands frequently.

COVID has cast a shadow on our lives, but how long it lasts is up to us. We can get through this together, but we need your help. We implore members of our communities to do everything you can to avoid COVID-19, especially this holiday season. Take every possible measure and precaution to keep you, your family, and your friends safe and healthy.

Robert Einterz, M.D.
Health Officer, St. Joseph County

Elizabeth Buchanan
District 2 Healthcare Coalition
(Elkhart, Fulton, Kosciusko, Marshall
Pulaski, Starke, and St Joseph Counties)