



NEWS RELEASE

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### **Phoebe Putney Health System Encourages Community to Follow Updated CDC Vaccine Guidelines**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recently updated immunization schedules for children, adolescents, and adults to ensure optimal protection against vaccine-preventable diseases, including COVID-19. Phoebe urges all community members to follow the CDC's updated vaccine recommendations, particularly amid a significant uptick in COVID cases.

"Vaccines are a cornerstone of preventive healthcare, offering safe and effective protection against a range of diseases. Following the CDC's updated guidelines ensures that individuals and communities stay healthy and resilient," said Dianna Grant, MD, Phoebe Putney Health System Chief Medical Officer.

With COVID-19 cases going up, the CDC recommends that everyone aged six months and older receive the current COVID-19 vaccine and appropriate boosters. These vaccines have been shown to reduce the severity of illness, hospitalizations, and deaths related to COVID-19.

The number of patients testing positive for COVID-19 at Phoebe primary and urgent care clinics has risen sharply in recent weeks. Cases hit a low point for the year the last week of May when only five patients tested positive. Cases have increased each week since then, shooting up to 119 for the

week ending July 20. That is the highest number of Phoebe patients diagnosed with COVID-19 in any single week since February.

The CDC advises that everyone aged six months and older receive an annual flu shot. Influenza remains a significant cause of illness and death, particularly among high-risk populations, such as the elderly, young children, and individuals with chronic health conditions. Flu shots are not yet available, but Phoebe should have an ample supply this fall.

For the first time, the CDC has recommended RSV vaccines for older adults and pregnant people to protect their newborns. RSV is a common respiratory virus that can lead to severe illness, particularly in infants and older adults. For adults, individuals aged 60 and older should consider receiving a single dose of the RSV vaccine after consulting with their healthcare provider. This shared decision-making approach helps determine if the vaccine is appropriate based on individual health risks. For pregnant women, the CDC recommends the Pfizer RSVpreF vaccine between 32 and 36 weeks of gestation. This vaccine significantly reduces the risk of RSV hospitalization in infants during the first six months of life.

Currently, Phoebe offers most adult vaccines at all its primary care clinics and children's vaccines in clinics that see pediatric patients. Phoebe does not currently have an inventory of COVID-19 vaccines, but those shots are readily available at many pharmacies throughout the region.

Other key vaccines recommended by the CDC include those for routine immunizations in children and adolescents, such as measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and hepatitis B. The HPV vaccine is recommended for preteens at age 11 or 12 to protect against cancers caused by human papillomavirus.

For adults aged 50 and older, the shingles vaccine is advised to prevent shingles and its complications. Pneumococcal vaccines are recommended for all children under two years old and adults aged 65 and older to protect against pneumonia, meningitis, and other serious infections. Adolescents should receive the meningococcal conjugate vaccine at age 11-12 years, with a booster dose at age 16 to protect against bacterial meningitis and bloodstream infections.

"Vaccinations are a vital tool in safeguarding public health. By staying current with recommended vaccines, we enhance our ability to prevent illness and promote wellness throughout our community," said Dr. Grant.

As a leading healthcare provider in southwest Georgia, Phoebe is committed to implementing these guidelines to enhance the health outcomes of its patients. Phoebe remains dedicated to promoting

vaccine awareness and accessibility and encourages everyone to stay informed and consult with healthcare providers to ensure they are up to date on their vaccinations.

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