



Dear friends and neighbors,

As we enter our second holiday season affected by COVID-19, I'd like to take a moment to express our gratitude for your support.

From the early days of the pandemic, people in our communities have reached out to help each other in many ways. You have sewn and donated masks, volunteered to deliver meals, supported area charities, and churches, and even donated previously used walkers and crutches to make up for supply chain shortages.

Last year at this time, the only protection we had against the spread of COVID-19 was to stay distanced and apart. Community events and traditions were canceled and families weren't able to gather for the holidays, all in hopes of keeping everyone safe and healthy.

This holiday season, we have safe and effective vaccines available for free to everyone over the age of five. Our community events are modified a bit, and family celebrations might be different from past years, but we are able to gather, cautiously, with friends and loved ones.

But our communities are not "out of the woods" yet. In fact, our team at FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport is caring for more patients hospitalized with COVID-19 than ever before. More than 30 people daily spent their Thanksgiving holiday weekend as an inpatient in the hospital being treated for COVID-19.

All hospitals in our region, including FHN Memorial Hospital, are operating at or near peak census, which means our caregiving teams are working beyond what we are able to staff for due to the national healthcare workforce shortage. According to the latest Illinois Department of Public Health data, the state of Illinois is seeing more new COVID-19 cases per day than it has in nearly 10 months, with an average of 4,618 new cases per day over the past seven days – a 122 percent increase in daily cases.

FHN's talented, dedicated, and caring team members have been working tirelessly for more than 21 months to care for and keep our patients and community members safe from COVID-19. Many are working extra hours and taking on additional shifts. All of them are working hard, wearing personal protective equipment, and implementing enhanced cleaning measures to help keep patients, visitors, and staff safe.

Now, we are asking for your help. **Please get vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus.** Science has clearly proven that the available vaccines are effective at mitigating the effects of the disease, and widespread vaccination can stop the spread of and mutation of the COVID-19 virus.

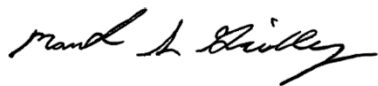
As we celebrate this season of gratitude, we ask that everyone please do their part to help stop the spread of COVID-19:

- Get vaccinated! Talk to your healthcare provider or visit www.vaccines.gov to find a convenient place where you and your children over the age of five can get vaccinated. Remember, COVID-19 vaccines are FREE.
- If you have been vaccinated, get your booster shot. Appointments are available for the Moderna booster on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays in December. Make your appointment at www.fhn.org/booster-registration.
- Even if you are fully vaccinated, take some very simple precautions to help stop the spread of germs:
 - Wear a mask if you're indoors with people other than close family and friends.
 - It's still safest to avoid big gatherings. Be mindful of social distancing when you're out and about, and respect people's decision to be "on the safe side."
 - Keep washing and sanitizing your hands often, and don't touch your face. This will help stop the spread not only of COVID-19 but of seasonal colds and flu.
 - Get your flu shot. A healthy body is better able to fight off germs, so don't take any chances this year. Influenza is circulating in our communities, and while many COVID-19 precautions help to stop the spread of influenza, it's best to be safe. You can get your shot at your healthcare provider's office or pharmacy near you.

Aside from COVID-19 concerns, it is also important to continue to tend to your regular and preventative healthcare needs. If you or a loved one is living with a chronic illness or condition, please continue to see your primary healthcare provider or specialist. All of our Family Healthcare Centers and Specialty Care offices remain open and are safe to visit.

And finally, please thank healthcare workers when you can – they are doing everything possible to care for you, your friends, and your family. Let's work together to have a happy, HEALTHY holiday season and 2022.

Best regards & health,



Mark S. Gridley, MBA, FACHE
President & Chief Executive Officer