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CCM NEWSLETTER

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Now, it's your turn!

Last month, we sent out a primer on how the vaccine works. This month, as the vaccine becomes more available to the general public, we want to focus on some key details surrounding the vaccine. Science is always rapidly changing. At the time of this newsletter publication- this is the most current vaccine information.

As you may know, there are two vaccines that the FDA has approved for Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). These vaccines are approved for adults 18 years old and older. Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna are the two companies that are distributing the COVID-19 vaccines.

This is **not** your traditional vaccine- like the flu vaccine or a tetanus shot. The COVID-19 vaccine is a very pure and precise vaccine. The flu vaccine is made by growing the virus inside a fertilized hen's egg. The virus is allowed to multiply in the egg's fluid.

Scientists then harvest that fluid to make the flu vaccine. This is different from the COVID-19 vaccine.

The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain any viral particles... AT ALL. It just contains exact instructions (mRNA) to help your body fight the COVID virus.

While Pfizer's vaccine was the first to be given EUA status, Moderna quickly followed suit. The Pfizer vaccine is very sensitive to temperature. It has to be stored at -94°F. The vaccine will start to degrade in 5 days when kept at normal refrigerator temperatures. Therefore, the Pfizer vaccine is given to places like hospitals or larger medical centers, that can safely store their vaccine.

While there are other vaccines currently in Phase 3 trial stage- the vaccine you will most likely get in the near future is the one made by Moderna.

Moderna Vaccine Facts

94.5% effective

2 doses given 28 days apart

Stored at -13 to -5 °F

30, 350 trial participants

Approved for use in people over the age of 18

What to expect when getting your vaccine:

The vaccine will go in your upper arm. Just like with any vaccine, you may be asked to wait after for 10 minutes of observation. You will be given a card with the type of vaccine that was administered, where and when. Do NOT misplace this card. You will bring it with you when you get your second dose.

Most commonly reported side effects:

- Injection site reaction (warmth, redness, tenderness)
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle Pain
- Chills
- Joint Pain
- Fever

This is NOT an infection...it's called an immune response. While these side effects are unpleasant, they do not last long and can easily be managed with over the counter Tylenol or ibuprofen. These side effects are less risky than taking your chances getting the actual COVID-19 infection. It is important to note that many people reported that the side effects were more significant after the 2nd dose.

For those that are concerned or hesitant about getting the vaccine for allergic reasons→ the vaccine does not contain aluminum, mercury or food allergens.

Can anyone get the vaccine?

- The safety and efficacy of the vaccine has not been assessed in individuals younger than 18 years old, therefore it is not given to kids at this time.
- The available data is insufficient to provide any information on vaccine associated risks in pregnant women. However, pregnant women are considered higher risk for COVID-19 complications and many physicians feel that the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the risks.
- There is no data available yet to conclusively make recommendations for breastfeeding women. It is well established with other vaccines that the antibodies the mother makes, can be passed along to her infant through the breastmilk-- which benefits the baby.
- The vaccine has been specifically studied in the older than 65 population-- therefore it is strongly recommended that this population get the vaccine.

I have had COVID-19, so I don't need the vaccine, right?

While we are still learning about the natural immunity after an infection, we know that it is not forever. *You should still get the vaccine*, but it is recommended that you get it after you have recovered from your infection. You should not need an antibody test before you get the vaccine.

How long does my immunity last after I get the vaccine?

This is something we are still learning about. We will know more about the immunity of the vaccine as people continue to get vaccinated. It is strongly recommended that you continue to wear your mask and physically distance after vaccinations.

I'm still unsure about the vaccine. How about I wait until other people get it and then I'll be protected by herd immunity?

So scientists don't quite yet know what percentage of people need to get the vaccine in order to provide herd immunity. This percentage varies by disease and because this disease is so new, we are still gathering information on how it behaves. Bottom line: Don't bank on herd immunity. Get the vaccine.

I'm ready to get my vaccine. Where can I get it and how do I ask for it?

By the time this newsletter reaches you, the vaccine may already be in its 4th week of distribution. The CDC has set forth certain guidelines on how they would prioritize vaccine distribution, but ultimately, they have left it up to the states and local health departments to make those final decisions. Different states have chosen to take different approaches to vaccine distribution.

Currently we are in the "limited supply" phase of distribution. The following tiers are eligible for vaccines

Tier 1a

Direct Care in

- Hospitals
- Long Term Care
- Emergency responders 9-1-1
- Home Health
- Outpatient
- Urgent Care/ER
- Pharmacies
- Last Responders

Long term Care Residents in Long Term Care facilities

Tier 1b

- Persons 65+
- Person's age 16+ with at least one of the following conditions:
 - ★ Cancer
 - ★ Chronic Kidney Disease
 - ★ COPD
 - ★ Heart Failure, Coronary Artery Disease, Cardiomyopathy, High Blood Pressure
 - ★ Solid organ transplant

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- ★ Obesity (BMI> 30)
 - ★ Pregnancy
 - ★ Sickle Cell Disease
 - ★ Type 2 Diabetes

The individuals who fall in Tier 2 and 3 are still under consideration.

If you fall within any of the Tier 1 categories you are eligible to receive the vaccine where available. Every week, the Texas Department of Health and Human Services releases a spreadsheet detailing the exact pharmacy or medical facility the vaccine allotment will be sent and how many.

Go to this website→ <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/immunize/vaccine.aspx>

On the right-hand side of the page you will see a heading titled “More Information”. In that box you will see links for the week allotment. Click on the latest week. Identify a few facilities that are close to you and CALL them. It is important to call them rather than just showing up. The vaccine takes some time to prepare, so facilities are scheduling patients to come in for the vaccine in order to prevent unpredictable wait times and to accurately prepare the correct number of doses. Additionally, there may be some facilities that are still prioritizing the Tier 1a individuals, this is why it is important to call multiple sites.

The clinic is currently not a site where the vaccine will be distributed. We are currently awaiting approval to be a vaccine site. In the meantime, we strongly encourage you to get your COVID vaccine in the nearby locations.

As always, we are here to help. Please let us know if you have any questions regarding the vaccine, side effects, and how to get it.

Cheers to a new vaccine and a more hopeful New Year!