



## **Frequently Asked Questions: COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution**

We are very pleased that the corona virus vaccine will soon be available for our employees. This is exceptionally good news since early studies have shown that the efficacy rate of the two-dose vaccine is 95 percent. This is a crucial step in stopping the spread of the corona virus, thus saving hundreds of thousands of lives. Our goal is to have 100% of our employees vaccinated over the next couple of months.

### **When will RMCHCS receive the vaccine?**

RMCHCS is anticipating receipt of 125 Pfizer COVID -19 vaccines starting on the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> of December and then another allotment of 125 doses weekly for the next two weeks, barring any unforeseen delays in delivery. We will receive our allotments of second doses in the series starting in January, with exact dates yet to be determined.

### **Has RMCHCS developed a priority list for receiving vaccinations?**

Yes. State and federal mandates and guidelines determine who may be vaccinated during this first phase and subsequent phases of vaccination. Front line healthcare workers, after many months of taking on huge risk to care for patients, are, by mandate, first in line.

RMCHCS has created a multi-disciplinary Vaccine Task Force to work through all the necessary logistics, including identifying those healthcare workers who are at highest risk for exposure so they can be prioritized to receive the vaccine at the earliest possible time.

The first 125 doses will go to those working in our facilities at the highest level of risks. Each vaccinated individual will need another vaccine dose 19-23 days after the first.

Any team member who is working with us now but will not be here for the second dose in 19-23 days, i.e. agency staff, will not be eligible for the vaccine. The initial vaccine allotment will go to:

#### **Priority Group 1**

Units that provide care for patients with COVID-19 (nurses, environmental services, providers, therapists, other staff in ICU, MSP, High Flow, Home Health COVID caregivers, COVID Clinic, Women's Health and ED).

We will announce the next priority groups as the next allocations become available.

### **How will employees be notified about when they can receive the vaccine?**

Employees will receive an email letting them know they are in the priority group to receive the vaccine.

### **Will employees be required to be vaccinated?**

We highly recommend that all staff get the vaccine. We hope that everyone understands that when they protect themselves with the vaccine, they also protect their family, their co-workers

and their patients. The vaccine will help maintain a safe work environment and allow our healthcare workers to continue to safely care for patients during this surge. Getting the vaccine is an essential step towards helping end this pandemic.

Our goal is 100% compliance. Choosing to decline or postpone will not prevent staff members from scheduling to get the vaccine in the future. If a staff member changes their mind, we would be happy to schedule them for a vaccination.

**What do employees do when they receive an email alerting them to their vaccination opportunity?**

When staff in the first two priority groups receive an email alerting them to their vaccination opportunity, it is mandatory that each person responds to Effie Edsitty with whether they will accept, decline or postpone their vaccine. Those that accept will receive instructions on how to schedule a vaccination appointment.

**Will there be a cost for employees to get the vaccine?**

No, vaccines will be free to all employees.

**How will people be sure to get their second dose? Is timing essential?**

We will send reminders electronically and work with managers for those employees who do not regularly use computers. The timeline for the second dosing is a minimum interval, and we will schedule follow-up doses when you receive your first dose to align with the second-dosing recommendations. It is important that everyone receive the second dose.

**If I am a healthcare worker and am in a medically high-risk group, what should I do when I am offered the vaccine?**

Many people in a high-risk group with co-morbidities are likely to benefit from the vaccine and are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated. If you have questions, you should contact your primary care provider to determine the best course of action.

**Can I wait to for a future vaccine when it comes out?**

We encourage everyone to take the vaccine that is available at the time the person is eligible. The vaccine that is available to RMCHCS is the Pfizer vaccine.

**If I tested positive for COVID-19, do I still need to get the vaccine?**

Yes, you should still get a vaccine; however, if you have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days, you are not eligible in the first priority groups. This will allow vaccination of other healthcare workers who remain susceptible to infection as current evidence suggests reinfection is uncommon during the 90 days after initial infection.

**What are the side effects of the vaccine?**

Vaccine side effects are variable. Some individuals participating in the trials have reported no side effects, while others have reported soreness and inflammation at the site of the injection. Others have developed symptoms that may include fever, headache, or muscle aches. When side effects are experienced, it tends to be with the second dose. If you received the first dose and experienced side effects that were not life threatening, you will be expected to receive the second dose. If you experienced side effects, contact Employee Health to discuss your options.

After receiving the vaccination, stay hydrated and use over the counter medications such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen to treat symptoms.

**What if I have an adverse reaction to the vaccine, that is more serious than the side effects?**

If you have an adverse reaction, such as swelling of the face, mouth, difficulty swallowing or breathing, you should call 911 immediately.

**What can I expect once I schedule my appointment?**

Vaccinations will be administered in the main hospital's second floor library for the week of 12/14/20. We will schedule you in a 30-minute window during which time you will receive your vaccine. Because we are still social distancing, it is important that you arrive for your vaccine as close to the time of your appointment as possible. You should bring your employee badge, and you will be asked to verify the information you had previously provided us and sign a consent form. After you receive your vaccination, you will be asked to remain at the vaccination station for a 15-minute observation period before leaving. We will provide you with an FAQ and information on side effects.

**What will happen if I first decline to take the vaccine and then change my mind?**

If you decline a vaccine and then decide later that you would like it, we will be happy to schedule a time for you to get the vaccine.

**Can I still get the vaccine if I am pregnant or breast-feeding?**

Once we receive guidance from the CDC, we will inform you

**If I am at high-risk for COVID-19, will my family be able to receive the vaccine when I do?**

We are following CDC guidelines and at this time will focus on our healthcare workers. Your family members should check with their Primary Care Physician to find out when they will offer vaccines.

**Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?**

No. This is not a live vaccine and you cannot get COVID-19. Some of the vaccine side effects are very similar to symptoms of COVID-19, but they should be mild.

**Once I get the vaccine, do I still need to mask and physical distance?**

Yes, vaccinated individuals will need to continue to follow our infection prevention practices, including masking and physical distancing. It is important for all of us to continue to practice these measures when at work and out in the community until we learn more about the impact of vaccination on the transmission of COVID-19 and when a large enough portion of our community has been vaccinated.

While the data is certainly still early, the COVID-19 vaccines appear to be about 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 infection and severe disease from COVID-19.

If you have any additional questions, feel free to email Effie Edsitty ([eedstitty@rmchcs.org](mailto:eedstitty@rmchcs.org)). She will ensure that your questions are promptly answered.