Madison County Memorial Hospital

December 23, 2020

When will MCMH receive the vaccine?
MCMH received its first shipment of the Moderna vaccine December 23, 2020. MCMH has a tiered distribution plan with priority going to those working in higher-risk areas.

Does MCMH have the right equipment, such as freezers, to store and distribute the vaccines?
MCMH established a working group who reviewed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for vaccine distribution and developed a plan to administer the vaccine and report immunization records to Florida SHOTS. Our plan is already in place and includes having the right equipment on-hand to store and distribute the vaccines.

Who will receive the vaccine first?
Distribution guidelines have been established by the CDC to prioritize people in high-risk areas first. Currently, we are in phase 1a of the vaccine distribution plan which includes healthcare workers and long-term care residents.

Will MCMH's workforce be required to receive the vaccine?
MCMH employees and contract staff will be encouraged, but not required at this time, to receive the vaccine.

Can the general public receive the vaccine when it is released?
Due to limited supplies of vaccines, priority has been given to healthcare workers and long-term care residents as these groups have a high-risk of exposure to the virus. Many experts expect the vaccine to be available for the general public in spring 2021.

Can I contract COVID-19 from the vaccine?
No. The vaccine does not contain the live virus that would cause COVID-19. Instead, it is designed to help you develop antibodies to help recognize and prevent the virus from causing infection. After receiving the vaccine, you may not feel well for a few days as the vaccination will trigger an immune response. However, symptoms such as runny nose, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell are not consistent with post vaccination adverse effects and may indicate COVID-19 infection.

If I receive the vaccine, does that mean I cannot catch COVID-19?
These COVID-19 vaccines, as with all vaccines, are not 100% effective, but are an important part of managing the pandemic. MCMH will still require masks, social distancing, and proper hand hygiene in our facility.

How is the vaccine given?
The two vaccines that have been currently approved require two doses.

Is the vaccine safe?
Vaccine safety is determined in terms of "adverse events", or when a patient experiences a negative effect after receiving their dose. Guidelines around this are very stringent, and too many or too severe events will cause a vaccine to be terminated during initial trials. By the time a vaccine reaches consumers, the risk of a negative outcome is very low.

Does this vaccine use live or dead virus?
Both Pfizer and Moderna's vaccines are mRNA vaccines, and AstraZeneca's and Johnson & Johnson's are non-replicating vectored vaccines. None of the early vaccines being tested are live weakened versions of the virus.

Do we have knowledge of what products are in the vaccine? Some people have concerns if the vaccine has a blood product due to their religious beliefs.
Both Pfizer and Moderna's vaccines are genetically manufactured and do not have a human or blood component.

When can I stop wearing a mask after I am vaccinated?
There is not enough information currently available to say if or when the CDC will stop recommending people wear masks and avoid close contact with others to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Experts need to understand more about the protection the COVID-19 vaccines provide before making that decision. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

Does immunity after getting COVID-19 last longer than protection from COVID-19 vaccines?
The protection someone gains from having an infection (called natural immunity) varies depending on the disease, and it varies from person to person. Since this virus is new, we do not know how long natural immunity might last.

Regarding vaccination, we will not know how long immunity lasts until we have more data on how well it works over a longer period of time.

Both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity are important aspects of COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about, and we continue to look to the CDC for guidance.

If I have had COVID-19, do I still need to get the vaccine?
The protection someone gains from having an infection (called natural immunity) varies depending on the disease, and it varies from person to person. Since this virus is new, we do not know how long natural immunity might last. What we do know up to this point is that the reinfection rate appears to be very low.

What is the effective rate for Moderna, AstraZeneca and Pfizer's vaccines?
Pfizer has indicated their vaccine has an efficacy rate of 95%, Moderna has announced its vaccine is 94.5% effective. AstraZeneca's vaccine efficacy has yet to be clearly stated, but it ranges between 60-90%.

How many doses of a COVID-19 vaccine will I need? What is the time period between the initial vaccine and the 2nd vaccine shot/booster?
Both vaccines will require two doses. An initial vaccination and then a second dose either three or four weeks later. The Pfizer vaccine requires a booster 21 days later and the Moderna vaccine requires a second dose 28 days later. The different vaccine products are not to be interchangeable. The second dose must be completed with the same vaccine brand as the first dose. Both doses are important to ensure full protection.

What if I miss my second dose of the vaccine?
These two COVID-19 vaccines do not reach their maximum effectiveness unless you receive the two doses. Your second dose will be scheduled after you get your first shot.

How long will it take for the vaccine to begin protecting me?
It normally takes about two to three weeks for immunity to develop. In the Pfizer vaccine clinical trial, the drop in infection rate between the vaccine group and the placebo group started around 14 days after the first dose.

What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?
Pfizer has said that some Phase III clinical trial participants experienced mild-to-moderate side effects with its investigational COVID-19 vaccine candidate. Scientists anticipate the shots may cause mild flu-like side effects — including sore arms, muscle aches and fever.

Will COVID-19 vaccines cause me to test positive on COVID-19 viral tests?
No. These vaccines will not cause you to test positive on viral tests, which are used to see if you have a current infection. If your body develops an immune response, which is the goal of vaccination, there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests indicate you had a previous infection or vaccination and that you may have some level of protection against the virus.

Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

Will I have to get a COVID-19 shot every year?
Scientists are still studying this and will determine this once the vaccine is distributed and more data is available.

After I receive both doses of the vaccine, am I still required to wear a mask at work?
Yes. We continue to follow CDC guidance on this subject.

The vaccines preliminary data shows it is 60-95% effective so there is a subset of the population that will not gain immunity from the vaccine. Furthermore, the protective effect of the vaccine may take at least one month. While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using **all the tools** available to us to help stop this pandemic, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others.

Unfortunately, the vaccine is not the proverbial “light switch” to turn off the COVID-19 pandemic. It will take some time.