Golden *Gazette*

COVID-19 VACCINE FOR OLDER ADULTS

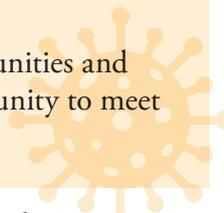## Those 65 and Older Among First to Receive It

Since the first shipment of COVID-19 vaccine arrived in the Fairfax Health District in late December, thousands of local residents received their first dose. These include health care workers, frontline essential personnel, and older adults.

Public health teams have been working to get all the available vaccines administered as quickly as possible, but caution that it will take time to vaccinate everyone who is part of a group targeted for vaccination as it can take months to get through each priority groups.

"The COVID-19 vaccine campaign is complex," said Jesse Habourn, public health emergency management coordinator, Fairfax County Health Department. "The vaccine requires unique storage, specific handling, special training for vaccinators, and vaccination spaces and appointments that keep people socially distanced and safe. Vaccine supply fluctuates week to week from the federal level to the states and down to the locals, which adds an additional layer of complexity. And, all vaccination planning is doubled because each person requires two doses."

Vaccination is a community-wide effort. Hundreds of health care volunteers and workers have been specially trained and mobilized to assist with the process. Community partners such as Inova and Reston Hospitals are contributing to efforts to get people vaccinated.

"With each vaccination phase there are new opportunities and challenges, and we are working together as a community to meet them and solve them," Jesse said.

This information was accurate at the time of printing. Please refer to the County's COVID-19 website for any recent updates or changes.

Schedule Your Vaccine Appointment

Vaccine-eligible people can register for appointments online OR over the phone (no need to do both).

- **Online:**
  www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19.
  Click on "**Vaccination**" at the top of the page and you will see registration information. After your registration is accepted, a scheduling link will be sent to you as vaccine becomes available.

- **Call:** **703-324-7404, TTY 711** to register for a vaccine via phone

Good to Know

- **Vaccine eligibility is occurring in phases per the CDC and Virginia Department of Health. More information can be found at**
  www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19.

- **As more vaccine becomes available in the future, you will likely be able to access vaccine via your doctor, a health clinic, or pharmacy.**

- **It takes two doses. Follow the directions of your vaccine provider to schedule your second dose.**

- **One caregiver can attend a vaccine appointment with their loved one for assistance. Caregivers do not receive vaccine at this time unless they are eligible and have made an appointment.**

Vaccine Appointment Tips

Take a picture of your vaccination card. That way you won't have to worry about misplacing it.

Watch Fairfax's COVID-19 **Vaccine Stories on YouTube**. Visit *www.youtube.com*, search "Fairfax Vaccine Stories"

Wear a mask to the appointment.

Download and use v-Safe. It's an app for reporting any reactions to the vaccine. Learn more: *cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/vsafe.html*

What to Expect After You Get Vaccinated

After you get the vaccine in your upper arm muscle, it's possible you may experience:

- **Pain and swelling at the injection site (this is the most common reaction).**
- **Fever or chills.**
- **Muscle aches.**
- **Tiredness.**
- **Headache.**

It's ok. While these symptoms may seem worrisome, they are normal and will go away in a few days. To reduce pain and discomfort at the injection site, apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area and consider using or exercising your arm. To reduce discomfort from fever, drink plenty of fluids and dress lightly. You can also take over-the-counter medication, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, to relieve these symptoms.

In most cases, discomfort from fever or pain is mild. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider:

- If the redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours.
- If your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days.

Do Not Be Alarmed. Remember:

- Side effects may make you feel flu-like and even affect your ability to do daily activities, but these should go away in a few days.
- With the current COVID-19 vaccines, you will need to get a second shot in order for them to work. Get the second shot even if you have side effects after the first shot, unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to get a second shot.
- It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. COVID-19 vaccines that require two shots may not protect you until a week or two after your second shot.

Please note: Severe allergic reactions have been reported following the Pfizer vaccine during vaccination outside of clinical trials. Individuals with a known history of severe allergic reactions (e.g., anaphylaxis) should consult with their medical provider before getting the vaccine.

Where a TTY number is not indicated, use 711/Virginia Relay.
Reasonable accommodations provided upon request, call 703-324-5411.

FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
FAMILYSERVICES

COUNTY OF FAIRFAX
1742
VIRGINIA

Vaccine and People with Disabilities

Fairfax follows guidance from the Virginia Department of Health regarding who can be scheduled to receive the vaccine during each phase. There is no category specifically for people with disabilities. Recently Virginia's Governor Northam included "People Ages 16-64 with High-Risk Medical Conditions or Disability that Increases their Risk of Severe Illness from COVID-19," into Phase 1b to provide vaccine access for this specific group. It is likely that people with disabilities will fall under various subgroups.

Fairfax County will ensure that the vaccine is accessible to everyone when it is their turn. If you need any accommodations to receive your vaccine you can notify your vaccine provider when you make your appointment.

How It Works

Vaccines work because they cause the body to produce an immune response against a disease. In the case of the Pfizer vaccine, it gives instructions to our cells to make a harmless piece of what is called the "spike protein." Our immune system recognizes that these spike proteins don't belong in our bodies so it begins building an immune response by making antibodies. The antibodies help protect you from getting COVID-19.

The COVID-19 vaccine is a long-anticipated tool that will help slow the spread of illness and end the pandemic. Getting vaccinated will protect you and people around you, including those at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. If you don't become infected, you can't spread it to others.

Vaccine Safety

COVID-19 vaccines have satisfied the requirements issued Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Before the FDA grants an EUA, the safety and efficacy of these vaccines were reviewed by FDA scientific staff and by an independent panel of experts convened by the FDA. The CDC and the FDA will continue to monitor individuals who have received the vaccine to ensure there is no evidence of even rare safety issues. The vaccines were tested in large studies to include tens of thousands of people to make sure they met safety standards and protect people of different ages, races, and ethnicities. The study results showed that the vaccines' benefits outweighed possible risks and provide protection from COVID-19.

COVID-19 can be a severe or fatal disease, even in young, healthy people. The risks from COVID-19 illness are greater than the possible risks from receiving the vaccine, therefore, when you are eligible for vaccination, it is strongly recommended you receive the vaccine. If you have specific questions about whether or not you should receive the vaccine when it is available, please contact your primary care provider. For general vaccine information you can contact our call center at **703-267-3511**.

In the meantime, it is critical for everyone—even those vaccinated—to continue wearing masks, practice social distancing and wash hands frequently. Although not everyone will be able to be vaccinated right away, but the goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine soon. Learn more about what to expect when it's your turn to be vaccinated.

The Golden Gazette is a free monthly community newsletter, produced by the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, that covers a variety of topics and community news concerning older adults and caregivers in Fairfax County. Subscribe online at fairfaxcounty.gov/older-adults/golden-gazette or call 703-324-GOLD (4653) and leave a message.

Health and Safety Measures

Even after you are vaccinated, you must continue to follow health and safety protocol. The CDC has given clear direction that individuals should still wear masks, stating "it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to us to help stop this pandemic, like wearing masks, washing hands often, and social distancing." **Please continue to practice health and safety measures:**

Wash your hands   **Wear a mask**   **Cover coughs & sneezes**

Maintain six feet of social distance   **Stay home when sick**

Stay Informed

For more information and the latest details, view our COVID-19 Vaccine Webpage: **fairfaxcounty.gov/ health/novel-coronavirus/vaccine.**

The FAQs on the COVID-19 webpage provides additional information about the vaccines, benefits, side effects and efforts within Fairfax County.

Health Department Call Center: **703-267-3511 (TTY 711)**

Text **FFXCOVID** to **888777** to receive updates from Fairfax County about COVID-19

For Spanish text **FFXCOVIDESP** to **888777**

Email questions or concerns to **ffxcovid@fairfaxcounty.gov**.

This email account will be staffed Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. through 6 p.m.

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