

Hello, I'm Joel Strasz health officer with the Bay County Health Department. Today is Tuesday, January 5th and this is your weekly COVID-19 vaccine update.

As of this week we are starting to register and provide vaccination to everyone in the 1A tier priority group. That includes all front-line healthcare workers, whether they're at the hospital, doctors clinics and providers offices or any other medical provider throughout the community. This also includes EMTs and first responders.

We are taking registrations right now through our county website so please follow the link below if you fall into this category. Once you register you will shortly receive a confirmation email that will invite you to a community-based clinic. Please respond to this as soon as possible, it may take a few days after you register for that email to come but please be on the lookout for this and we will get you the vaccine as soon as possible.

We are soon going to begin 1B vaccinations and 1B vaccinations include all critical infrastructure workers as enumerated by the state of Michigan and persons 75 and older. There was a great deal of confusion earlier this past week about a phone registration system and we are working diligently to get a robust phone registration system in place that will effectively be able to register folks for these vaccinations, but if you have access to the internet you don't have to wait you can register on the county website via our SurveyMonkey link found below.

Now we'd like to do some frequently asked questions about the vaccine:

How are you currently distributing the vaccine?

At this time the Bay County Health Department has a limited supply of vaccine and since the the middle of December the Bay County Health Department and McLaren Bay Region have begun vaccinating workers in the 1A category and this includes all front-line medical providers. McLaren is vaccinating everyone on their behalf and in the McLaren universe and we are trying to attempt to vaccinate all 1A medical workers that do not have an affiliation with McLaren. This is quite a daunting task we have over a thousand people in the queue waiting to get vaccinated so please be patient.

What is the end goal for the Health Department in regards to vaccinating our population?

Well in order to effectively free ourselves of the restrictions that we currently face we must achieve herd immunity and that means approximately 70 percent of Bay County residents need to be vaccinated for COVID-19. That is in in plain numbers 72,000 people. Right now the vaccines that are available require two shots or two doses so that actually requires about 140 or 144,000 doses total and in order to do this by July 4th, which is our goal, we need to work with a whole army of providers, every provider in Bay County, in order to do so.

Which COVID-19 vaccine is the Health Department currently offering?

Presently the only type of vaccine in Bay County is the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine. It's an mRNA type of vaccine. It requires two doses 21 days apart. We've given out well over a few thousand shots total here in Bay County between the Bay County Health Department and McLaren Bay Region and I'm happy to say that so far we have not had anyone with any adverse reactions so far.

Are there any side effects associated with the COVID-19 vaccine?

Usually if there are any side effects you might have a sore arm, you may have a headache in 24 hours following that you may have a slight fever or feel malaise or tired or fatigued. Very rarely does anyone have any type of significant side effects other than that. One thing that we do encourage people as they get the vaccine is to sign up for the V-Safe program. It's an application that you can use on your phone and it's really simple to do, it will ask you a few questions about the side effects that you may be having and that information will go straight to the CDC so they can better project the types of side effects that people are having. But as of right now for the few thousand doses that have occurred here in Bay County we haven't had any problems at all.

Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I have already tested positive for the virus?

Yes, you can get the vaccine if you've been diagnosed with COVID-19 virus. The only thing is we want you to be recovered when you get the vaccine. One of the key elements that we have to have in place as we provide vaccines is we still have to have social distancing occur, so if you are symptomatic or even if you're in quarantine we're asking that you reschedule your shot or your vaccine. But if you've had COVID-19 and you've recovered then we highly encourage you to get the vaccine.

How much will the COVID-19 vaccine cost?

Actually, there are no out-of-pocket expenses for the COVID-19 vaccination. In some cases we do ask for your insurance information so that we can obtain the administration fee from your insurance company, but that is merely so that we can pay the bill so we can provide the vaccine to you. There is no out-of-pocket cost so if you do not have insurance or you do not have any ability to pay we're not asking for any money or anything like that. We want to provide the vaccine to you as quickly as possible.

Do I need to wear a mask after getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes absolutely and the reason why is number one while the vaccine will protect you from having severe illness from COVID-19 it may not protect you in total from getting COVID-19 or spreading COVID-19. So you still need to wear a mask until it's universally accepted that it's a safe time that you don't have to wear masks anymore.

So I want to thank you for joining me today. Join me weekly, we're going to have weekly updates and even sometimes bi-weekly updates because we've got information changing all the

time about the vaccine and the virus and we will have more information listed on our website at www.baycounty-mi.gov. Thanks again and I'll see you soon.