

Klamath County Public Health

COVID-19 vaccination known information

December 11, 2020

Governor Kate Brown held a press conference this morning about the anticipated release of a COVID-19 vaccine next week. Here is what Klamath County Public Health knows at this moment:

The plans are evolving every day. Information here is based on the best knowledge at this time. It is unknown how many doses of vaccine will initially be available in Klamath County.

Klamath County is part of Oregon's Region 7, which includes Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Harney, Jefferson, Lake and Wheeler counties.

The hub for vaccine distribution for the region is Bend's St. Charles Medical Center. When the vaccine arrives there, it will be distributed to other hospitals in a matter of days.

Ultra-cold storage is important in this first round of vaccine from Pfizer.

Hospitals will administer vaccines to their staff as part of Phase 1a. Phase 1a prioritization flexibility is limited. Inclusion of long-term care facility staff and residents in this population is a state decision.

In Phase 1, there are three steps. Phase 1a includes healthcare professionals and long-term care facility residents. Phase 1b are essential workers, such as members of the education sector, food and agriculture, utilities, police, firefighters, correction officers and transportation workers. Phase 1c are adults with high-risk medical conditions and adults 65 and older.

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended health care workers and long-term care facilities receive the first round of vaccines. Oregon has approximately 350,000 health care workers. Oregon Health Authority knows there won't be enough vaccine for everyone at first. OHA is collaborating with providers to help determine an equitable sub-prioritization and distribution for health care workers across the state. The first COVID-19 vaccine recipients will likely be frontline health care workers in hospitals, especially those directly exposed to the virus.

Hospitals will be the primary site for immunization of the 1a group

- The majority of those in this group will work in or near the hospital
- They can manage the ultra-cold chain required by the Pfizer vaccine
- Centering it at the hospital allows for high throughput
- It protects hospital employees to maintain adequate staffing

Three distributions of vaccine are expected statewide this month. The total is about 127,000 first doses.

- December 15: about 35,000 of the Pfizer vaccine
- December 22: about 41,000 Pfizer and about 72,000 Moderna
- December 29: nearly 49,000 Pfizer and more than 31,000 Moderna (these include second doses for those who previously received the first dose in a prior distribution)

The schedule for the second dose is 21 or 28 days after the first inoculation, depending upon the vaccine.

Distribution may also consider facilities' storage and dissemination capabilities. It is hoped all health care workers and those associated with long-term care facilities will be immunized by the end of January 2021.

Guidance on who is eligible to receive vaccines will be modified as vaccine supply increases and distribution moves into Phase 1b and Phases 2 and 3.

OHA is gathering a panel of technical advisers to help with the allocation and dissemination challenges of shipping vaccines across Oregon.

Phase 1b includes essential workers who keep communities safe and the economy running. Input is currently being sought, especially from communities of color, to identify and prioritize vaccine distribution for Oregon's essential workers. Phase 1c of ACIP's recommended distribution plan includes adults age 65 and older and those with high-risk health conditions.

Oregon's focus during Phase 2 will be to employ strategies to maximize vaccine uptake among vulnerable populations through open points of distribution and community vaccination events in partnership with community-based organizations and clinics serving disproportionately affected communities. Additionally, the provider network will expand to reach much larger populations as the vaccine supply allows.

Oregon's focus for Phase 3 will be to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccine throughout the health system in primary care offices, retail pharmacies, and traditional routes of receiving preventive care, and to ensure that all people in Oregon that have not yet received vaccine have access.

OHA officials hope to see multiple safe and effective vaccines approved for fighting COVID-19 over the coming weeks and months to help stop the virus. Until everyone can all be vaccinated, we must continue to stop the spread by wearing masks, washing our hands, limiting social contact and staying home when we're sick.