**Vaccination, what to expect!**

We vaccinated a whole lot of people last weekend! On Sunday at the EPH community vaccination clinic alone we got 329 community members started on their first vaccination shot. This number along with those who have already received theirs earlier and from other agencies are helping our community get back to normal and it’s about time.

There is a lot involved with these vaccinations regarding the logistics of getting them out into the communities. Also, what to expect when you get yours!

The first is having the vaccine itself to give. Since Estes Park is a ‘small’ town, like so many other ‘small’ towns across Colorado, we often get overlooked by the big guys. It takes a little more effort to be seen and to be included in the distribution of where the vaccines are released.

It’s not always fair how distribution works and often leaves us frustrated and questioning the strategy of it all. The good news is that they are figuring it out. So, when we get the vaccines it’s our priority to get them out to our own community members as quickly as possible.

Not anyone can distribute this vaccine either. The importance of keeping the vaccine frozen at the right temperature until ready to be used is only one of the key distribution factors. Then when a vial is opened, there needs to be 10 or 11 individuals ready to receive their dose within a 6-hour window. And then there is the registration of who has received it and a promise that they’ll return for their second dose, the screening and education of side-effects, etc. There’s a lot of little things that make the distribution work properly.

Should you get the vaccination? Yes, when your name, age group or business comes up, you should get it. With this being said, please make sure that you are on the Larimer county list for the vaccination, no matter what your age. Every organization servicing Estes Park goes to that list when they receive some of the vaccine to distribute. Between Estes Park Health, Salud Family Health Center, UC Health we are slowly ticking names off that list. Yeay!

The consensus at Sunday’s community vaccination clinic was a unanimous pain-free, easy shot to receive. Almost everyone that I visited with couldn’t believe that they didn’t even feel it. The only pre-shot recommendation is that you do not take any over-the-counter pain-relieving medication prior to getting the shot. So, no acetaminophen or ibuprofen. However, after the shot you can take it if your arm begins to feel sore or if you begin to show any side effects.

Side effects that we’ve seen (also documented in recent research articles) include a sore arm at the spot of injection for 24-48 hours (2.7%), possible swelling or redness at the injection spot (2%), fatigue (9.7%), fever or chills, headache (4.5%), joint pain and muscle aches (5.2%). These side effects can last from a few hours to a few days, depending on how your body reacts to vaccinations in general.

Long term side effects are not known yet, due to the newness of this vaccination. It’s important to know that the second shot may cause harsher side effects than the first shot.

“Just like the flu shot can’t give you the flu, the COVID-19 vaccination will not give you COVID-19. These side effects basically show that the immune system is being primed,” says Richard Watkins, M.D. an infectious disease and professor of internal medicine at the Northeast Ohio Medical University.

Early research is saying that the Pfizer vaccine (after 2-doses) is more than 90% effective and the Moderna’s clinical trial says 94.5% effective after 2-doses. Moderna is the vaccine being given here in Estes.

If you’ve been sick with COVID-19, you still might benefit from getting the vaccine. Still not a lot of information regarding this, however if you have other co-morbidities go ahead and get the shot even though you’ve had COVID-19.

Yes, we still need to protect ourselves with all the protection strategies that we’ve been doing until the number of cases slows down. Masking, social distancing, hand washing. Keep in mind that it’ll take around 10 days after your second shot to receive maximum protection for the longest duration!

Hope to see you around town very soon!!