

Virginia Department of Health
#VaccinateVirginia
Covid-19 Town Hall Meeting
Wednesday, December 16, 2020, 7- 8 PM

Notes:

Moderated by Juan Conde

Panel Members:

- Dr. Norman Oliver – Virginia Health Commissioner
 - Dr. Ebony Hilton – Critical Care, UVA Health
 - Dr. Costi Sifri – UVA Health Infectious Disease Doctor
 - Dr. Ethlyn Gibson – Hampton Univ., School of Nursing
 - Dr. Karen Shelton – Mount Rogers Health District Director (SW Virginia)
 - Marshall Vogt – Virginia Department of Health
 - Marvin Figueroa – VA Deputy Secretary for Health and Human Resources
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- First to be vaccinated will be Health Care Workers
 - Next will be high risk populations, including nursing home/assisted living residents and staff
 - Essential/infrastructure workers such as teachers, first responders and food handlers; folks who keep our communities running, etc.
 - Two brands of vaccine are available: Pfizer and Moderna. Both vaccines are equal in their efficacy, but they're not interchangeable.
 - You must receive two doses of the vaccine, and the second dose must be from the same brand as the first (second dose must be given 3-4 weeks after first dose).
 - Virginia is currently slated to get 72 thousand of the Pfizer, and when the Moderna vaccine becomes available, we will have a total of 480 thousand vaccines.
 - You will receive a card when you get your vaccine, stating the date of the first dose, batch number, which vaccine you received, and the date when you return for your second dose – it's recommended you take a photo of that vaccine card and place that photo on your calendar as a reminder.
 - How long until we can expect all Virginians to be vaccinated? It may be a while - we are looking at possibly next spring or summer until we can achieve "herd immunity" (which requires approximately 70% of the population to receive the vaccine).

- How the vaccine works: Once scientists determine the genome of a virus, they can create a Messenger RNA, or mRNA. The technology has been around for decades. mRNA produces a message in the cell to combat the corona virus and other similar viruses.
- Vaccines were pre-purchased to provide the researchers with funds to conduct their research.
- Test subjects reflected the proportions in our populations by gender, race, ethnicity, age, etc., including folks with pre-existing conditions, in order to make sure it was safe for all; this same effort was done world-wide.
- It is always good to have conversation with your physician to ensure the vaccine is right for you.
- You cannot get corona virus by taking the vaccine. As mentioned, mRNA is not a full virus.
- The vaccines are 95% effective. **The vaccine is safe.**
- There is still much that is not known about the vaccine. Vaccination does not mean you can go without your mask or stop social distancing as you can still shed the virus even after being vaccinated.
- Side effects from the vaccine are to be expected. It is your body learning to fight off the virus. Normal side effects at the site of the shot are similar to getting a flu shot; tenderness, and overall tiredness. Younger people have a stronger reaction after the second shot. The severity of side effects depends upon the individual's immune system – people with severe allergic reactions should plan to have an Epi-pen with them when vaccinated. If you are someone who regularly carries an Epi-pen, you need to have that conversation with your doctor to determine if you should get the vaccine.
- People with pre-existing conditions such as heart or lung disease, hypertension, obesity, diabetes, etc., are more likely to die from Covid-19 but should not be afraid of taking the vaccination as the vaccination can significantly decrease symptoms if they do contract Covid-19.
- You should take your flu shot to remove the flu out of the equation of your health condition.
- At present, there is no information regarding covid-19 in animals
- Longevity of the vaccine is unknown at this time.

- If you had covid-19, and recovered, you should still get the vaccine. Immunity wanes, so getting the vaccine improves your immunity.
- It is recommended that you document how you are feeling each day after receiving the vaccination so that others getting the vaccine later will know what to expect.
- You should continue to wear mask, social distance and wash your hands regularly after you receive the vaccine, and continue to avoid large gathering.
- There is no cure for Covid-19, only treatment... so your best defense against serious illness or death is getting the vaccination.
- Beware of scams – never give personal information over the phone. **YOU CANNOT BUY THE VACCINE – IT WILL BE FREE.**

More information can be found on the Virginia Department of Health's website at vdh.va.gov

From notes taken by Lisa Rohrbach and Vince Ogilvie