

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Vaccine Update for Southwest Nebraska

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is working with state public health officials and local hospitals to implement plans for the recently approved COVID-19 vaccines. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is distributing the vaccines in phases, following federal guidelines for each phase. At this time, the vaccine is not widely available. Healthcare facilities are reporting being overwhelmed with calls from the public seeking the vaccine. We are asking the public to stop calling healthcare facilities and the health department in search of the vaccine. Instead, wait patiently while the vaccine is distributed utilizing the federal guidelines.

The first phase prioritizes those in the highest risk categories, including frontline healthcare workers, emergency medical services and long-term care facilities. Frontline workers are most likely to be exposed to positive individuals, and long-term care residents are most at risk for severe illness from COVID-19. SWNPHD is working with local public health partners to complete Phase 1A with an anticipated completion date of January 9th. Phase 1B will launch as Phase 1A nears completion. The vaccine is not available to the public at this time nor is anticipated until March or April at the earliest. Further information will become available with each phase when enough vaccine is available.

FAQ's:

How long after I receive the vaccine will I be immune to Covid-19?

- It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. The vaccination requires 2 shots so full protection may take a few weeks after your second shot.

Do I have to have two shots?

- Yes, if you receive the first vaccination, you must receive the second vaccination with a separation of 28 days for the vaccine to be fully effective.

The COVID-19 Community Risk Dial for the week of December 28th remains at orange, meaning residents of southwest Nebraska have a high risk of contracting COVID-19. Testing is available but may require travel. Healthcare systems in the health district and across the state are burdened but adequate for the number of people hospitalized for COVID-19. Orange level recommendations include wearing a mask in public, washing hands and surfaces often, limiting travel, and working from home when possible. High-risk and vulnerable individuals should avoid public places.

SWNPHD had 166 new cases of COVID-19 reported December 22nd to December 28th. A breakout by county includes: Chase – 41; Dundy – 4; Frontier – 6; Furnas – 8; Hayes – 3; Hitchcock – 17; Keith – 29; Perkins – 12; Red Willow – 46. This brings the totals for the health district to 2875 cases with 2611 cases recovered.

COVID-19 information can be found at dhhs.ne.gov and at swhealth.ne.gov. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook.

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