

December 7, 2020

Dear School of Medicine Community:

You've likely heard from news reports, two COVID-19 vaccines have been submitted to the FDA and the first could be authorized for emergency use and distribution as early as mid-December. BJC will have priority access to vaccines for health care workers and is able to offer you the opportunity to be vaccinated.

Below you will find the latest information that you need to know about the vaccine. To help you learn more, the School of Medicine is hosting an online Town Hall from 1-2 pm. on December 9, where you can hear directly from Washington University infectious disease specialists. The session will be recorded for later viewing by those who are unable to join.

Can I get a vaccine and how?

Vaccines will arrive in shipments over the course of many months. Everybody will eventually have the opportunity to be vaccinated. The first round will be prioritized for health care workers who provide direct patient-facing care*– and is expected to begin on December 17. After careful review of our employee population and to ensure equitable access, BJC will be scheduling vaccines for direct patient care providers in waves organized by age. Starting later this week, employees in the first age group will receive an email with information on vaccine event times and locations, and with instructions on how to schedule their vaccination appointment. A succession of emails will be distributed in the coming weeks until every age group has had an opportunity to schedule their vaccine. It is essential you wait to be contacted before attempting to schedule an appointment. **You will not be able to receive the vaccine before receiving the email.**

Is the vaccine approved?

Due to the accelerated development timeline in response to the pandemic, the first round of vaccines are expected to be approved by mid-December under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). This is a process the federal government uses during an emergency to authorize use of a vaccine, drug or medical device that is not yet licensed or that is licensed for a different purpose. Such treatments must undergo extensive testing and safety evaluation to receive an EUA. Learn more about [Emergency Use Authorization here](#).

Is it safe and effective?

Clinical trial data from both Pfizer and Moderna show an estimated 95 and 94.5% effective rate for these initial vaccines, respectively. The vaccine is the best defense against the virus and is an important step toward eradicating community spread. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have a thorough and scientific process to evaluate vaccine safety before granting emergency use authorization. The clinical trials do show possible side effects that can include fever and body aches. [Learn more about vaccine safety and efficacy here.](#)

Should I receive a vaccine?

While receiving a vaccine is voluntary at this time, this is a valuable early opportunity and we encourage you to take advantage of this access. Talk to your provider if you have questions regarding your personal health situation.

WashU leadership is in close contact with state and federal health authorities as well as the St. Louis Regional Pandemic Task Force and will share updates as new information is available. In the meantime, it is critical to remain vigilant with safety measures to protect against infection. It will be many months before the community reaches a vaccination rate that will enable us to safely begin relaxing those measures. Now, more than ever, with hope on the distant horizon, please stay focused on safety:

- Continue to wear masks when you leave your home or when you cannot maintain six feet of space from others
- Remember to practice physical distancing
- Wash hands frequently
- Avoid crowds and stay home unless fulfilling essential needs like work, school, shopping and medical care

An FAQ with more information about the COVID-19 vaccination can be found [here](#).

This is an important milestone and cause for celebration, particularly for our caregivers who have worked so passionately and tirelessly since the onset of the pandemic. Thank you for your continued compassion, excellence and resiliency.

Paul J. Scheel, Jr., MD
CEO, Washington University Physicians

David H. Perlmutter, MD
Executive Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs and Dean

***Patient-facing definition:**

Any paid or unpaid individual performing work within a BJC hospital or other BJC/WU facility who has direct interactions with patients, works in a patient care area or has potential exposure to infectious materials from patients. Credentialed providers should be currently directly seeing patients within a

BJC hospital or BJC/WU facility or scheduled to provide patient care within the next 6 months. These HCP may include, but are not limited to nurses, nursing assistants, physicians, technicians, therapists, phlebotomists, pharmacists, students and trainees, contractual staff not employed by the health care facility, and persons (e.g., patient access/registration, screeners, valets, dietary, environmental services, laundry, security, maintenance, engineering and facilities management, clinical research staff) not directly involved in patient care but interacting with patients or potentially exposed to infectious materials from patients. Does not include staff working remotely.