

NEWS RELEASE

April 26, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID Update for Southwest Nebraska April 26th

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) received 1,000 doses of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine and 200 doses of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine in the last two weeks. The safety and effectiveness of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine has been confirmed by the CDC and the FDA. Nebraska providers who have a current supply of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine should resume using those doses, per Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), to protect residents in their communities from COVID-19. SWNPHD is working with local partners and schools to also bring Pfizer vaccine to youth in southwest Nebraska. Pfizer is the only vaccine available at this time for persons aged 16 and 17 years.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Myth and Fact Sheet: *Will a COVID-19 vaccine alter my DNA?* **No.** COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. There are currently two types of COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized and recommended for use in the United States: messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines and a viral vector vaccine.

Both mRNA and viral vector COVID-19 vaccines deliver instructions (genetic material) to our cells to start building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. However, the material never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept. This means the genetic material in the vaccines cannot affect or interact with our DNA in any way. All COVID-19 vaccines work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease.

Nebraska residents can register to receive COVID-19 vaccine at vaccinate.ne.gov, the official waiting list for the nine-county health district. Currently, persons are being vaccinated in one week or less. If you do not have computer access, please call 308-345-4223 to register.

The statewide COVID-19 Risk Dial, based on the amount of hospital capacity used for COVID patients, is currently in the green level. SWNPHD continues to recommend wearing a mask in public, washing hands and surfaces often, and avoiding the 3 C's: crowded spaces, close contact, and confined spaces. Per CDC guidelines, those who have been vaccinated do not need to mask when around others who have been vaccinated for COVID-19.

SWNPHD had 15 new cases of COVID-19 reported from April 13th to April 24th. Chase County-1, Dundy County-2, Furnas County-2, Frontier County-0, Hayes County-1, Hitchcock County-0, Keith County – 1, Perkins County – 5 and Red Willow County – 3, bringing the total number of cases to 3806. DHHS has identified around 420 cases of variant strains of COVID-19 in the state, none so far were from southwest Nebraska.

COVID-19 information can be found 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 and can be reached by calling 308-345-4223.

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