

NEWS RELEASE

April 13, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID Update for Southwest Nebraska April 13th

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, which brings the total distribution to 9,300 doses for southwest Nebraska. **At this time, DHHS has temporarily paused the use of the Johnson and Johnson one-dose vaccine until the CDC and FDA complete an investigation.** Vaccine safety and the health of Nebraskans is the top priority, and this pause is being recommended out of an abundance of caution. SWNPHD and local partners will continue to work to vaccinate Nebraska residents age 18 years and older with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, with a goal of 70% of the population vaccinated against COVID-19.

Per the Center for Disease Control's Myth and Fact Sheet: *Can a COVID-19 vaccine make me sick with COVID-19?* **No.** None of the authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine **cannot** make you sick with COVID-19. All of the vaccines teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this process can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and a sign that the body is building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19.

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity (protection against the virus that causes COVID-19) after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and still get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has identified around 200 cases of variant strains of COVID-19 in the state. Other areas of the US have seen spikes in case numbers due to these variants, and state public health officials are anticipating a similar increase in the near future. SWNPHD encourages residents to use the skills they have learned to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and take advantage of the extra layer of protection that is available from the COVID vaccines. While the effectiveness of the 3 currently approved vaccines against these new strains is still being studied, good results have been seen in Nebraska's long-term care facilities and nursing homes that have high rates of residents and staff vaccinated. There are very few cases of COVID-19 in these facilities, and none have caused large-scale outbreaks like were seen prior to the vaccines becoming available.

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 get on the waiting list.

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 9 new cases of COVID-19 reported from March 29th to April 12th. Keith County – 3, Perkins County – 2 and Red Willow County – 4, bringing the total number of cases to 3788. There was one death due to COVID-19 in SWNPHD in the month of March; however, 14 additional deaths have been reported to SWNPHD as a result of an audit that was conducted of the COVID-19 cases during the fall wave and early 2021. All deaths due to COVID-19 are submitted to state health officials and then must be positively confirmed before being reported to local health districts, which can lead to significant delays. By month, the following additional deaths were identified: October - 3, November - 3, December - 4, January - 1, and February - 1. This brings the total deaths due to COVID-19 in southwest Nebraska to 74.

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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