

COVID-19 Vaccine Availability

Update January 4, 2021

Last week the Florida Department of Health discussed providing the Moderna vaccine to our office for staff members who wished to receive the vaccine. Our office manager, Judi Stanich, requested enough vaccine to cover the entire practice. We were told we would have a confirmation this morning.

This morning we learned the vaccine isn't available yet. The vaccine comes in vials of 10 shots. The vials are kept frozen and can remain active in that state or in a refrigerator for 30 days. Once a vaccine vial is opened the entire vial must be used in under six hours or it degrades.

Moderna and the Florida Department of Health require patients to complete legal release forms for the vaccine. They must then be registered into the Florida Shots data bank and a national data bank. That is one of the reasons patients are asked to bring their driver's license with them.

If you have had a severe allergic reaction to any medication the Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines may not be best for you. If you have ever had to use an Epi Pen or have been treated for anaphylaxis these shots are not for you. The Astra Zeneca Oxford vaccine and the Johnson and Johnson vaccine are thought to be more suitable for those individuals

After receiving your shot, you will need to be observed by medical staff for 15 minutes to look for adverse reactions. You will be given an instructional sheet on how to register with V-SAFE which is a CDC vaccine monitoring app. Every day, at about 2:00 p.m., you will receive a text message with questions about how you feel related to the vaccine.

Medical malpractice insurance companies have not yet formally announced whether physician insurance policies will cover administration of this vaccine in their offices because none have been FDA approved. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have received FDA Emergency Utilization Authorization (EUA) which is not the same as approval.

Currently the only avenue to obtaining the vaccine in Palm Beach County is to try and get through on the 561.625.5180 phone number or leave your demographics on an email at CHD50Feedback@Flhealth.gov. Baptist Health System is planning on opening reservations for seniors 65 years of age and older the week of January 11 working with Boca Regional Hospital, Bethesda Hospital and the FAU Schools of Medicine, Nursing and their EMT program. They have not announced how to make a reservation or if they will be using the data from the Palm Beach County Department of Health through the phone number and email address provided above.

I suspect that by the middle of February there will be plenty of vaccine available locally including the Astra Zeneca Oxford product and the Johnson and Johnson products. In the meantime, remain patient and continue to avoid crowds and continue to social distance, wear suitable face masks and keep up the hand hygiene. Please remember that after you complete your vaccinations (two shots for the Pfizer and Moderna Products) we will not know how much immunity the shots will provide and for how long.

We additionally do not know if successfully vaccinated individuals are completely immune or partially immune if they are exposed to the virus. Furthermore, we don't yet know if you are vaccinated whether you can carry the virus and transmit it to someone else even if you don't have any symptoms.

Getting the vaccine will not be a reason to resume activities at crowded gyms, crowded bars or go on that cruise ship just yet. The hope is that by the summer 2021 we will have the answers to the many unknowns.