

HOT TOPIC #55: September 25, 2021

COVID-19 updates from San Juan County around subjects on the minds of islanders

FAQ on Booster Doses

The CDC and FDA recently granted approval for the delivery of booster doses of the Pfizer vaccine to certain fully vaccinated individuals. This Hot Topic will attempt to answer some of the most common questions about this new development.

Q: Why are booster doses necessary?

A: Global case data suggests that there may be some reduction in vaccine effectiveness over time. The size of that decrease and the risk of serious illness that could result are largest in older and high-risk individuals. It is important to note that, even after six months, the vaccine is still considered very effective and does a very good job of protecting against serious illness and hospitalization. Offering boosters is a strategy to ensure the highest level of protection for higher-risk individuals and is not a sign of an inadequate or malfunctioning vaccine.

Q: Who is Eligible?

A: The following individuals are being told that they **should** receive a booster of the Pfizer vaccine:

Anyone who received their **second** dose of the Pfizer vaccine more than six months ago, and meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. Are age 65 or older;
2. Live in a long-term care facility;
3. Are age 50 to 64 and fall into one or more of the following high-risk categories: high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, cancer, chronic lung or kidney disease, dementia, and certain disabilities. [Go here for more details.](#)

In addition, the following individuals are being told that they **may** receive a booster of the Pfizer vaccine:

1. Anyone who received their **second** dose of the Pfizer vaccine more than six months ago, and meets one or more of the following criteria:
2. Are age 18 to 49 and fall into one or more of the following high-risk categories: high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, cancer, chronic lung or kidney disease, dementia, and certain disabilities. [Go here for more details.](#)
3. Work in a high-risk occupational setting, including education, healthcare, childcare, or emergency response.

Please remember that these guidelines are likely to evolve in the weeks to come.

Q: What if I received the Johnson & Johnson or Moderna vaccine?

A: Other vaccines have not been approved for booster doses at this time, but it is expected that review for approval of boosters will be occurring in the weeks or months to come.

Q: If I received Johnson & Johnson or Moderna, can I get a booster dose of Pfizer? Is it OK to mix and match?

A: No. There is some speculation that mixing doses will be approved at some point in time, but that has not happened to date, and there is no expectation that it will soon.

Q: Weren't some people already authorized to get a third shot?

A: Yes, a small number of immunocompromised individuals were authorized to work with their healthcare provider to obtain a third dose of either Moderna or Pfizer vaccine at least 28 days after their second dose of vaccine. Please review [this page](#) for full details.

Q: If I am eligible for a booster dose, how do I obtain it?

A: Many local pharmacies and healthcare providers continue to offer vaccinations to their patients, including third doses for immunocompromised individuals. In addition, the San Juan County Health & Community Services vaccination team will be operating monthly clinics on Lopez, Orcas, and San Juan to deliver booster shots. Those clinics will be widely advertised once open for registration, and information will be posted at www.sjccovid.com.

Q: Will there be enough vaccine to meet the demand?

A: At this time, it is expected that there will be enough vaccine on hand to meet the need. San Juan County Health & Community Services will be offering scheduled monthly clinics on each of Lopez, Orcas, and San Juan Islands to deliver booster shots. In conjunction with medical providers and pharmacies throughout our community, we anticipate that islanders who became eligible during the previous month will be able to access their booster doses on a rolling basis through one of these sources. Eligible islanders should note that they likely will not be able to schedule their booster exactly six months after their second dose and may have to wait no more than a month after their six month anniversary until the date of the next monthly clinic.

Q: Will the National Guard be returning to support vaccinations?

A: It is unlikely that National Guard support will be made available. Local providers have steadily increased their capacity since the beginning of the vaccination effort, and San Juan County is working with an array of public and private partners to ensure that capacity will meet demand.

Q: How are the side effects of the third dose?

A: While studies are ongoing, it appears that booster dose side effects are relatively mild, perhaps comparable to the initial or second dose.

Q: Will I have to wait for 15 minutes after receiving a booster dose?

A: Yes, guidelines for third shots are identical to previous doses.