

HOT TOPIC #42: January 22, 2021

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

Vaccine FAQ 5.0

With the Governor's recent authorization to deliver vaccine to those in the Phase 1b Tier 1 eligibility group, the level of questions and concerns from the community has understandably increased. This Hot Topic will attempt to answer some of the most common questions we're hearing.

Some things to keep in mind:

-This is the fifth in a series of vaccine Hot Topics. It is the latest information, but it may also be useful to review previous editions by going to www.sjccovid.com and clicking on the Hot Topics section.

-This situation is inherently unsatisfying and challenging. There is no perfect approach to many of the decisions being made, and the whole effort is constrained by a limited supply of vaccine. Lots of people in lots of places are doing the best they can to make this work, some more successfully than others. We think our approach here in the islands will work, but that doesn't mean it is flawless.

-For some time to come, demand will exceed supply.

-Local medical providers and pharmacies will play a critical role in vaccinating our community. This Q&A will focus on the San Juan County response but know that there are a number of local healthcare providers working hard begin administering doses.

QUESTION: Where do I learn about whether I am eligible for vaccine and if I am, how do I sign up?

The best source for information is the County's COVID Vaccine Webpage:

<https://www.sanjuanco.com/1737/COVID-Vaccine-Info>

QUESTION: What local healthcare providers or pharmacies are giving vaccine now, and how do we schedule with them?

At this moment, other than San Juan County Health & Community Services, Lopez Island Pharmacy is the only other provider of vaccine to Phase 1b Tier 1 individuals in the County. Scheduling procedures will vary from provider to provider, but in general DO NOT call the provider. Check their website first and look for messaging from them in the local media and via direct communication with their patients and customers.

Lopez Island Pharmacy is providing updates [via their website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

QUESTION: This online registration is complicated and frustrating; it is like getting a reservation to get on a ferry on a busy summer weekend. Isn't there a better way?

By no means is the system perfect. It leads to a rush of people seeking appointments, with many disappointed. And there's no waiting list.

That said, we think the current online reservation system is the best tool there is given the situation and the resources available. The supply of vaccine is extremely limited. As more supply becomes available, fewer people will be disappointed.

As far as a waiting list goes, the challenge is that a waiting list would quickly have 4,000 or more people on it. We wouldn't know when future slots were available (because we don't know what future vaccine supply will look like), and we wouldn't know what future availability for those who sign up looks like in order to schedule a shot. And at some point, people will have other options in the islands for obtaining vaccine and might not need their appointment after all.

There has been hope that the state or federal governments would roll out a web-based tool that would automate the entire process, including maintaining a waitlist and automatically scheduling off the wait list as slots open. Without that, the way to schedule people on a waiting list is via a detailed telephone conversation. With thousands of people on a theoretical list, we simply don't have the staff to manage it.

For now, the system is pretty much just like ferry reservations. We'll let you know when slots open up ([info posted at top of Vaccine Page](#)) and there will be a scramble to get slots. We know it is far from ideal, and it increases the anxiety and frustration of those trying to get in, but it is what we have.

As with everything COVID, the key is staying patient and keeping up with everything we're doing to stay healthy.

QUESTION: I got online, selected an appointment time, and then when I went to confirm my appointment, I was told that no slots are available. What happened?

As with many online reservation and purchasing systems, your slot is finalized when you actually confirm. If you did not get to the screen that shows your final appointment details and if you did not receive a confirmation email, you do not have a reservation.

QUESTION: How do I schedule my second dose?

When you register, you will automatically be scheduled for a second dose exactly 28 days later (same day of the week, same time). Make sure you mark that time clearly on your calendar. Don't miss your second appointment as there will not be an opportunity to reschedule missed appointments.

QUESTION: My spouse and I share an email address and we each registered using the same email, is that a problem?

It is easier if a couple uses separate emails, but for those that only have one address, it will be fine. Your second confirmation message will have the name of the first person who registered, but so long as you receive two confirmation emails, you have two appointments. If you both come to your appointments at the time booked for each individual, we'll sort it out.

QUESTION: If I do have an appointment what do I need to do or bring with me in advance?

1. MAKE SURE YOU DO NOT MISS YOUR APPOINTMENT. BE ON TIME. Thank you!
2. Wear a mask.
3. If you have one, bring your photo ID
4. If you evaluated your eligibility via the [Find Your Phase](#) tool, take a screenshot or print out your confirmation page and bring it with you ([it looks like this](#)).
5. [Watch this short informational video](#).
6. Dress comfortably, and wear a short sleeve shirt, or other garment that provides easy access to your arm.
7. If you use a wheelchair, walker, or cane, you can bring them with you. If you need assistance, a friend, family member or caregiver may accompany you. If you are alone and need assistance, let us know once you arrive and we will help you.

QUESTION: When will more vaccine arrive in San Juan County?

At this point, Health & Community Services has little advance notice about when vaccine will arrive, or how much will arrive when it does. This is frustrating, but the State does not receive accurate information like this from the Federal Government, so it is difficult for WA DOH to keep local jurisdictions informed. There is hope that communication and delivery efficiency will improve in weeks or months to come, but that remains to be seen.

QUESTION: I have friends or family who have been able to receive a shot in King County, or Alaska, or other locations. Why not here?

There are lots of variables of course, including:

-The number of local healthcare providers or pharmacies providing vaccine: In most counties in WA, hospitals, chain pharmacies, and other providers are giving vaccine – for now, our options in the islands are limited- San Juan County Health & Community Services and the Lopez Island Pharmacy. Hopefully other providers will begin delivery soon and help to lessen the demand.

-Every jurisdiction is different. For example, in Alaska the percentage of the population over the age of 65 is relatively low, there are relatively few communities, and many of the native corporations received vaccine in the earliest days of the rollout. It is difficult to compare.

-Some got lucky. As we look around, most of the places that had appointments for a day or two after the Governor's announcement are now booked solid.

QUESTION: If I receive my first dose elsewhere, can I receive my second dose with the Health & Community Services?

No. Every time a vaccine is delivered, WA DOH allocates a second dose to the provider of that first shot. If you are immunized at one site, you need to return there for your second. This may change as supplies

increase.

QUESTION: The registration system is dependent on internet access. What about those who lack connectivity or otherwise have limited ability to register in this way?

Addressing this is a top priority for agencies and organizations in the islands that serve those in need of support and assistance. County Health & Community Services is working with the Family and Community Resource Centers, Senior Services, and others to reach out directly to those in need and ensure they have access to the vaccine. This includes everything from support with signing up to helping with transportation.

Thanks everyone. Clearly this is a trying time, appreciate your patience.