

# HOT TOPIC #44: March 7, 2021

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

## The Johnson & Johnson Vaccine

As most are aware, the Johnson & Johnson COVID vaccine is now the third vaccine approved for use in the United States. While it is unclear when this vaccine might become available in San Juan County, some supplies could potentially arrive in the near future.

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Before we go any further, let's just highlight the most important thing:

**If you have an opportunity to get a shot, get a shot.** Regardless of the type of vaccine.

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This article isn't going to delve into specific detail about the vaccines, but instead provide an overview. [The CDC has more detailed information](#) if you are interested.

There has been discussion about the Johnson and Johnson vaccine being less effective than the existing Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Some things to know:

-The official measure of effectiveness for the Johnson and Johnson vaccine is less than the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines (72% vs 95%). However, comparing those numbers alone is very misleading. Here is why:

-First off, as a comparison point, the flu vaccine is usually about 40-60% effective. The flu vaccine does an exceptional job of preventing people from developing severe flu. It saves countless lives each year. It is a very good vaccine. 72% effectiveness is remarkable, and well above initial estimates of how a COVID vaccine might perform.

-All three vaccines appear to be equally effective at keeping those infected with COVID out of the hospital (and alive!). This is really important.

-The Johnson & Johnson vaccine was tested more recently (when COVID variants were more widespread), and in countries like South Africa and Brazil. The fact that it is still so effective is extremely promising. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were tested earlier, and their effectiveness against variants of COVID is less understood.

-If you were to combine these factors into a more nuanced assessment of the vaccines, the effectiveness of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine would increase.

In addition, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only one dose. And in general, its side-effects are milder than the other vaccines.

And while this doesn't impact the person being vaccinated, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is a far hardier product, with many fewer restrictions around temperature and storage.

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So, just to reiterate:

**If you have an opportunity to get a shot, get a shot.** Regardless of the type of vaccine. All of the vaccines currently available are very good at preventing people from becoming seriously ill from COVID.

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