

# HOT TOPIC #51: June 3, 2021

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

## The Way Forward

As we move into a new (and far better!) phase of the pandemic, now is a good time to look at the current COVID situation, and where things are likely headed.

### COVID VACCINATION RATES:

As of June 2<sup>nd</sup>, San Juan County is leading WA in vaccination rates. Approximately 78.7 % of residents 12+ have initiated their vaccinations. 64% of all San Juan County residents are fully vaccinated, and that number will grow in the weeks to come as COVID immunization and 2<sup>nd</sup> dose clinics continue.

### CURRENT COVID VACCINATION AVAILABILITY:

In addition to local medical providers, the San Juan County vaccination team will be operating occasional walk-in vaccine clinics through the end of June at specific times and locations. Full details are available at:

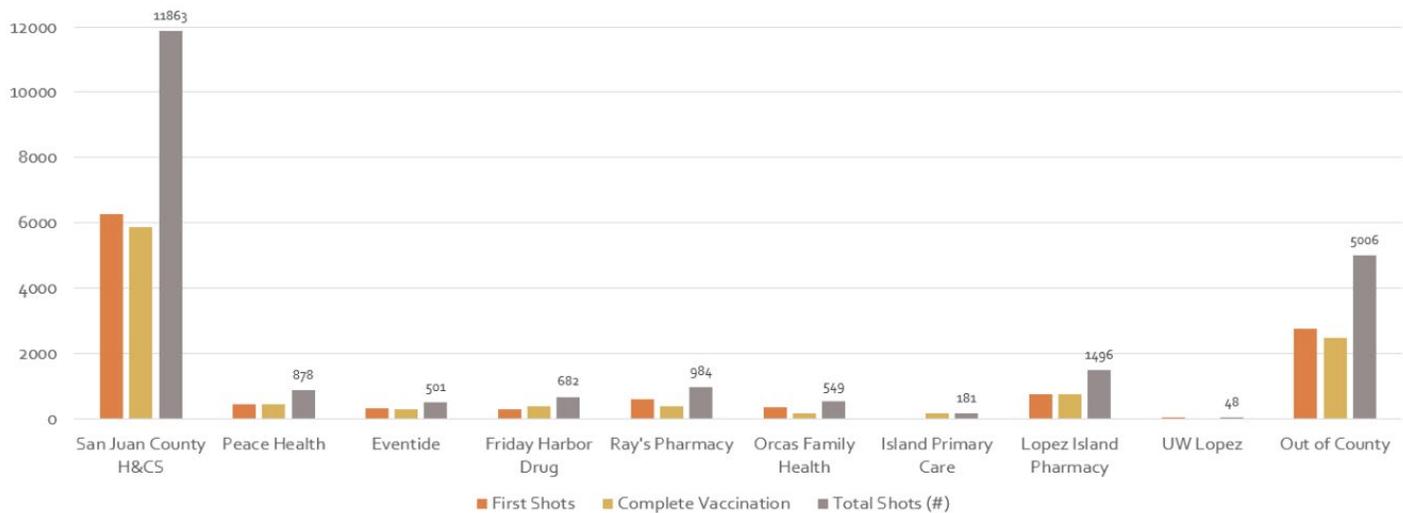
<https://www.sanjuanco.com/1737/COVID-Vaccine-Info>

### FUTURE COVID VACCINE AVAILABILITY:

Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, those needing COVID vaccination will need to obtain their vaccine through their local medical provider or pharmacy, or a mainland equivalent (please check with your provider to confirm availability).

To date, the majority of vaccinations provided to islanders have been administered by the County, but that responsibility will shift back to local providers come July. See table below for a breakdown of vaccine administration by provider.

Number Vaccinations Administered by Provider



### COVID VACCINATIONS FOR KIDS:

Well over 300 island residents age 12 to 15 started their vaccination series during the County's recent Pfizer clinics for children. Those who attended those clinics will receive their 2<sup>nd</sup> doses at County Pfizer clinics over the coming week to complete their vaccine series. For those who did not attend those clinics, unvaccinated islanders between the ages of 12 and 17 will need to receive their vaccine through a mainland provider who offers Pfizer vaccine, which is the only vaccine approved for children 12 years and older.

There is no firm date for when a vaccine for children 11 and under will be available, but it is hoped that one will be approved for emergency use by the fall of 2021. Children may receive their COVID vaccines from local medical providers in the same way as other routine vaccinations. It is also a great time to get your child caught up with other vaccines before the school year begins.

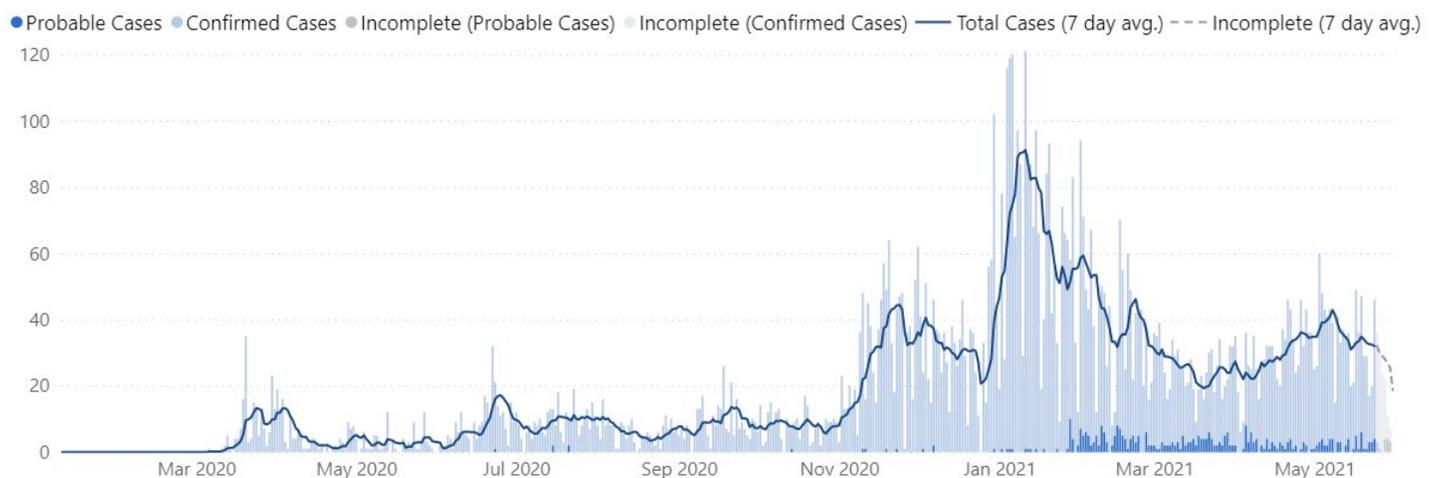
### COVID VACCINE BOOSTERS:

At this time there is no confirmed information on when vaccine boosters will be required, but it is expected that a booster may be needed to provide ongoing protection against COVID. Delivering boosters will be the responsibility of local medical providers, in the same way as the flu vaccine or other routine immunizations. It is almost certain that the situation regarding both boosters and the availability of additional types of COVID vaccine will be evolving rapidly in the months to come.

### CASE TRENDS:

Cases are declining sharply across the United States and Washington. For those who choose to be unvaccinated or are caring for children 11 or under, it is important to note that while case rates are dropping in many locations, they are still relatively high. For those who are not protected, there is still ample potential to be exposed to COVID. Take a look at this chart from neighboring Whatcom County for a sense of the situation:

CASE COUNTS



### WILL THERE BE CASES IN SAN JUAN COUNTY THIS SUMMER?

There is no doubt that there will be periodic cases that pop up in the islands amongst those who are unvaccinated. Hopefully the islands' high vaccination rates will minimize any opportunity for spread, but there may be pockets of unvaccinated individuals where some spread is seen. **Children 11 and under are a particular concern.**

As always, the County Contact Tracing Team will work to aggressively investigate and contain all positive cases.

### MASKING:

At this time there is a San Juan County Health Officer Order in place requiring that customers mask up inside all island businesses or other indoor public spaces. That Order will be revisited no later than June 26<sup>th</sup>. It is anticipated that this order will be lifted by the end of June. Going forward, both state and federal regulations will likely require masks on public transit, in schools, and in healthcare facilities.

### OVERALL REOPENING:

While there is no confirmation of the Governor's plans, it is anticipated that a near full reopening will be announced by the end of June, dependent on ongoing developments and case trends.

### TESTING:

As cases decline and vaccination rates increase, the likelihood of contracting COVID declines. Nonetheless, we still need

to consider the possibility of COVID when feeling sick, especially for those who are unvaccinated. There are no hard and fast rules, but below are some rough guidelines. As always, contact your medical provider if your symptoms are severe or worsening.

If you have been traveling or mingling in a dense crowd, socializing with unvaccinated individuals, or have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID, please reach out to your medical provider to discuss the need for testing. This is particularly important if you are experiencing runny nose, sore throat, fever, cough, loss of taste or smell.

**BIG PICTURE:**

We're not yet at the finish line, but we can see it ahead of us. The islands have weathered this storm well, and despite the enormous challenges and impacts, the pandemic has also brought out the very best in our communities. We have much to be proud of and grateful for.

At the same time, it is important to remember that most of the world isn't feeling nearly as optimistic. Countries are still struggling with vaccine availability and roll-out, and staggering numbers of people are still dying in many parts of the world. Helping end the pandemic for all should be a top priority, for reasons of practicality (reducing the likelihood of future variants and spread), but most of all for reasons of shared humanity.

Thanks Islanders.