

HOT TOPIC #56: October 28, 2021

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

New FAQ on Moderna and J&J Booster Doses, Pediatric Doses, and More...

There are lots of developments around both vaccine boosters and vaccines for younger kids. This Hot Topic will attempt to summarize the current situation and discuss plans for upcoming vaccine clinics in the islands.

Q: Who is eligible for booster doses for the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines?

A: First off, there are several groups of people who the CDC is saying *should* get a booster shot, as they are at the highest risk, and have the most to gain from a third shot. These groups are:

- Anyone who received their second dose of Pfizer or Moderna COVID vaccine at least six months ago, **and**
- Are age 65 or older, **or**
- Are age 50-64 and have an [underlying medical condition](#), **or**
- Are age 18 or older and live in a long-term care facility

In addition, the CDC is saying the following groups *may* get a booster shot, as they are at a lower, but still increased risk:

- Anyone who received their second dose of Pfizer or Moderna COVID vaccine at least six months ago, **and**
- Are age 18-49 and have an [underlying medical condition](#), **or**
- Work in certain high-risk settings (primarily schools or healthcare)

Full details on eligibility [are available here](#). Note that approval has been given to obtain either the Pfizer or Moderna booster, regardless of which of the two vaccines you obtained originally.

Q: Where should I get my booster?

A: Many local providers and pharmacies are offering COVID vaccine (see list at the bottom of [this page](#) for full details). In addition, San Juan County will be offering monthly Moderna clinics on Lopez, Orcas, and San Juan Islands beginning the week of November 15th. Almost 3,000 appointments for the November booster clinics are now open at: <https://www.sanjuanco.com/1737/COVID-Vaccine-Info>. In addition, a limited number of Johnson and Johnson appointments are now open as well (see question below for more info on Johnson & Johnson).

Q: What about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

A: Anyone who received their dose of Johnson and Johnson vaccine over 2 months ago is approved to (and should!) obtain a booster dose of any of the three approved COVID vaccines. There is some early data that suggests obtaining the Moderna vaccine may offer the highest level of protection, but the important thing if you were originally vaccinated with Johnson and Johnson is to get a booster of any kind. Note that staff of San Juan County public schools who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine are welcome to sign up for either Moderna or Johnson & Johnson boosters through [the County website](#), but also will be contacted by their

school leadership with details about on-site vaccine clinics for school staff to be held later in November and early December.

Q: How important is it to get a booster dose?

A: At this point, it seems clear that anyone over 65, anyone over 50 with a severe underlying medical condition, and anyone who was vaccinated with Johnson & Johnson should definitely get a booster. Boosters are less critical for others who are eligible and are not needed at this time for those who are not currently eligible. Overall, scientists are pleased by the effectiveness and durability of the vaccine, and some current research is suggesting that two or three doses may be sufficient to provide adequate protection for some time to come.

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 booster shots are identical to previous doses.

Q: What about kids under the age of 12, are they eligible yet?

A: At the time of writing, final CDC approval of the Pfizer vaccine for ages 5-11 has not yet been granted, however it is expected within the next week or so. These pediatric doses will be smaller than the adult doses offered to date, and will require two doses, spaced at least three weeks apart. Once approved, San Juan County will be offering pediatric Pfizer clinics in November (and then second dose clinics at least three weeks later). Once approved, details and registration links will be available at:

<https://www.sanjuanco.com/1737/COVID-Vaccine-Info>. Parents are also encouraged to contact their child's healthcare provider to discuss vaccination options.

Q: How important is it for my child under the age of 12 to get the pediatric dose?

A: Very important. Almost 35% of recent COVID cases in San Juan County have been in unvaccinated children under the age of 12. While the impacts of the illness are often quite mild in kids, symptoms are more severe in a small number of children. In addition, unvaccinated kids are a high risk for transmission to adults, who more frequently experience far more serious symptoms.

The islands have a very high vaccination rate for children age 12-18, and this has been an enormous part of our middle and high schools remaining open and relatively unimpacted by COVID this fall. There have been more cases in our elementary schools and getting our younger island kids vaccinated ASAP should be a top priority for our community.