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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COVID-19 Safety Measures, Testing Remain Important While Vaccination Efforts Are Ongoing

Health officials say prevention measures should continue even after being vaccinated for COVID-19, and testing for the virus should continue until the vaccine is widely available.

Humboldt County Public Health Clinic and Communicable Disease Program Supervisor Hava Phillips, RN, said she is excited to see the vaccine being administered locally but cautioned that it takes time for the body to build an immune response even after receiving both vaccine doses.

“The first dose offers some protection, but it can take a few weeks after the second dose to be protected against severe illness, and that protection isn’t 100% guaranteed,” Phillips said. “Virus prevention measures and testing will help to limit the spread of COVID-19 until vaccine uptake is far reaching.”

In a recent interview, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr. Anthony Fauci explained that the vaccine is intended to prevent symptomatic disease, not necessarily to prevent infection. He went on to say that while asymptomatic transmission will continue to be of concern, reducing symptoms—particularly coughing and sneezing—will lessen transmission because people who do become ill will spread fewer respiratory droplets containing the virus.

After receiving both doses, residents should continue to follow COVID-19 prevention measures, including wearing a face covering over the mouth and nose when in public, staying at least 6 feet away from others, avoiding gathering with those outside of one’s household and washing hands frequently.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states vaccine effectiveness varies slightly depending on the manufacturer, although both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines currently approved for Emergency Use Authorization by the Food and Drug Administration have demonstrated about 94% effectiveness at preventing severe illness due to COVID-19.

Continued testing for COVID-19 remains an important tool in reducing transmission. Phillips said, “Until vaccine is available for all who want it, we need to keep identifying cases as early as possible, so we can stop chains of transmission before they spread through our community.”

OptumServe, the state-contracted COVID-19 testing provider, continues to provide free testing seven days a week at Redwood Acres in Eureka. Testing is available at a different location in the county each weekday:

- Eureka – Seven days a week, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (Redwood Acres, 3750 Harris St.)
- Arcata – Mondays, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Arcata Community Center, 321 M.L.K. Jr. Pkwy.)
- Garberville – Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (SoHum Health Sprowl Creek Campus, 286 Sprowl Creek Road)
- Fortuna – Wednesdays, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (River Lodge Conference Center, 1800 Riverwalk Dr.)
- Hoopa – Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (Tsewenaldin Inn, 12482 CA-96)
- McKinleyville – Fridays, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Azalea Hall, 1620 Pickett Road)

Schedule an appointment in advance to make sure a test is available when you need it. To schedule a no-cost appointment:

- Go to lhi.care/covidtesting, or
- Call 888-634-1123.

Read more about the Moderna vaccine at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/Moderna.html.

Read more about the Pfizer vaccine at cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/recs/grade/covid-19-pfizer-biontech-vaccine.html.

Local COVID-19 vaccine information: humboldt.gov/vaccineinfo
Humboldt County COVID-19 Data Dashboard: humboldt.gov/dashboard
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