

Community Weeklies

4.26.21

Second Doses

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Vaccines have been used in public health for decades. Each vaccine has been thoroughly studied and tailored to the disease it is trying to prevent. Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, like almost all other vaccines, require more than one dose to get optimal protection. The first dose acts as a jump-start, helping our cells to recognize the COVID-19 virus. Your body will begin to make antibodies, so you do get some protection from your first dose of a two-dose vaccine. The second dose of the Pfizer vaccine is given 21 days after the first dose; the second dose of Moderna is given 28 days later. The second dose provides the immune system more opportunity to fight the virus, giving the body even more of a boost to make more antibodies.

In the last week or so, the Roanoke City & Alleghany Health Districts (RCAHD) have seen slightly higher rates of people not showing up for their second dose. This is concerning: if you received a Pfizer or Moderna shot, you need a second dose to optimally protect yourself and your loved ones. When the vaccines were approved, the clinical trials studied participants receiving two doses of vaccine. With the 33,000 people enrolled in the Moderna trials, and the 44,000 people enrolled in the Pfizer trials, and the millions of people who have been vaccinated since, we know the science backs up the effectiveness of receiving two doses. We don't know how effective a single shot would be in the long run or how long it would last. It is possible that people who receive only one dose of a two-dose vaccine will only have partial immunity to a COVID-19 infection, leaving them vulnerable to getting COVID-19.

It is also important to get your second dose in the recommended time frame. However, if for any reason you are delayed in receiving your second dose, just try to get it as soon as you can. Experts believe that as long you receive your second dose within six weeks of the first, you should have good results. If you are delayed, you do not need to start over with a first dose.

If for any reason you have postponed your COVID-19 vaccine, please schedule it now. Visit vaccinefinder.org to schedule an appointment at a time and place most convenient for you. We still have a lot of the virus circulating in our communities. The protection that the vaccines provide against the virus is critical because for some people, COVID-19 can cause severe illness or even death. In fact, more than 570,000 Americans have died from COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. Fortunately now that COVID-19 vaccines are widely available and more people getting vaccinated, the spread of the virus will slow down. As disease activity decreases there is a lower chance of new variants (mutations that occur when the virus replicates) arising.

Our region has plenty of vaccine for anyone over the age of 16 who wants to receive it, including those in need of a second dose. You can call us to schedule an appointment, at 540-613-6597, or visit vaccinefinder.org. The COVID-19 vaccine is one of the most powerful tools we have to stop the pandemic. Getting it — along with wearing masks and social distancing — is the best way to protect you, your family, and your friends from this deadly disease.