Dear Veteran,

We are currently offering COVID-19 vaccination appointments to Veterans in keeping with CDC and VHA vaccine prioritization guidelines. As we have largely worked through our 1a and 1b vaccine priority groups, we will begin expanding into priority group 1c. Please note, that priority group 1c is very large. As we work to expand into the 1c vaccine priority group by specific age ranges, we are now offering COVID-19 vaccines to 1c Veterans, **70 and older**. We will continue to expand into the 1c vaccine priority group as more doses become available.

We know that this is a personal decision and for those of you who choose to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, there is nothing you need to do at this time. If you are in the **70 through 74 age group**, you will receive a text message prompting you to schedule your COVID-19 vaccine appointment as appointments become available. If you do not have text message capabilities, we will call you directly to schedule an appointment as available.

If you are not in priority groups 1b or 70 years and older and would like to let us know that you are interested in receiving the vaccine, please register at https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/stay-informed. Please note that we are only offering vaccination to Veterans enrolled with VA health care.

Our end goal is to support having the highest percent of our population vaccinated. If you are able to receive your vaccine in the community sooner, please know that you are able to schedule with that community provider.

Thank you for your service and thank you for choosing VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System for your health care needs.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: How many doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will I need to take? Will I need a booster dose?

A: Both of the COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized for use require two doses. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine requires two doses to be given 21 days apart, while the Moderna vaccine requires two doses 28 days apart. Please remember that if you receive dose 1 of either currently available vaccines, you must receive dose 2 with the same vaccine manufacturer (either two Pfizer-BioNTech doses or two Moderna doses).

Q: Can I choose to receive either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines?

A: Due to the extreme storage requirements by the manufacturer, we can only offer the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center at this time. This means that for those currently wishing to receive a vaccine, they must travel to the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center for their appointment until we receive supply of the Moderna vaccine which requires less critical temperature storage requirements. Again, it is our goal to provide the vaccine to any Veteran wishing to receive one and we are working as quickly and safely as possible to reach our Veterans in outlying communities with available supply.

Q: What are the potential side effects of the COVID-19 Vaccine?

A: Sometimes after vaccination, the process of building immunity can cause symptoms, such as fever and other flu-like symptoms. These symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is developing immunity. Long-term side effects are not known because the vaccine is still so new, but there will be ongoing monitoring for side effects for those who receive the vaccine.

There has been media coverage of a rare side effect, called anaphylaxis, has been reported in approximately 1 person per 100,000 vaccinated. Our vaccine site is prepared to respond if this rare side effect occurs.

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Q: Should a person with a history of allergies (e.g., to peanuts, shellfish, penicillin) receive the COVID vaccine? Does it matter if it is the Pfizer vaccine or the Moderna vaccine?

A: The only known medical condition that precludes a person from receiving the vaccine is a known allergy to any component of the COVID vaccine itself, e.g. polyethylene glycol (PEG) or polysorbate. However, persons with other allergies may take the vaccine and will be monitored carefully for any side effects or allergic reaction. Either of the currently available vaccines is acceptable.

Q: Will VA monitor COVID-19 vaccination reactions?

A: Yes. VA clinicians will be closely monitoring Veterans for reactions or adverse events. To accurately evaluate the vaccine's safety, it will be critical for VA, CDC, and FDA to adequately document and report these adverse events. If you choose to be vaccinated, we will encourage you to discuss any adverse events or reactions immediately with your Primary Aligned Care Team.

Q: How long will my COVID-19 vaccine immunity last after vaccination?

A: We won't know how long immunity lasts until we have more data on how well the vaccine works. Please visit the CDC COVID-19 Vaccine website for more information.

Q: If I get vaccinated, can I stop wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

A: No. Even if you've had a COVID-19 vaccine, you still need to wear a face mask to protect yourself and others.

Q: Can I be vaccinated if I've already had COVID-19?

A: Yes. A person who has recovered from COVID and been cleared to leave isolation may receive a COVID vaccine. COVID rarely recurs within 90 days of an episode. A person who has recovered from COVID may wish to wait 90 days to be vaccinated.

Q: Will I be able to get the vaccine through my VA-approved community provider?

A: Yes. Your health is important to us and we want you to receive the vaccine as soon as possible. Receiving the vaccine from a VA-approved community provider will be treated no differently than getting any other vaccine from your VA-approved community provider.

Q: Will I have to pay a copay for the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: We are not planning to charge any fee for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Q: Will I receive Beneficiary Travel for getting Vaccinated?

A: If you are currently eligible for Beneficiary Travel, you may file a claim; however, if you are not currently eligible, we will not be able to pay mileage for your trip.

Q: Where do family members, caregivers, or friends, who are not Veterans, get the COVID-19 vaccine?
A: If your family members, Caregivers, or friends are not Veterans but would like information about the COVID-19 vaccination, they may speak with their Primary Care provider, or their State or local public health office.

For Colorado residents, please call the Colorado Department of Public Health at 1.877.462.2911. Caregivers who are enrolled in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers may receive vaccine from VA-ECHCS. You may also find out more about where Colorado is vaccinating at: Where can I get vaccinated? | Colorado COVID-19 Updates

Q: If I have never enrolled in VA health care, where can I get started?
A: There are several ways to apply for VA health care. The easiest way for those who use a computer is to go to WWW.VA.GOV and click on the link "Apply now for VA Health care". You may also contact the Health Eligibility Center at 1.877.222.8387 to speak with an expert who will assist you.