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## A COVID-19 vaccination Q&A

By Jenn Freedman



Dr. May Lin administers vaccine to office manager Aryana Davani. Photo provided

The COVID-19 vaccination rollout has been a bit bumpy so far, causing confusion and frustration for some in the community. To help, Lamorinda Weekly connected with Contra Costa Health Services as well as two local doctors, May Lin, D.O., family medicine physician and local mom, and Andrew Min, M.D., pediatrician and local dad, to answer some common vaccine questions.

Lamorinda Weekly (LW): Can you explain the tiers for rollout and the confusion and inconsistencies in who is prioritized to be vaccinated?

Dr. Lin: The tiers for rollout are meant to prioritize high risk groups. It has been confusing due to frequent updates and different strategies by different counties, which is determined by supply. There have also been inconsistencies when comparing county and state websites with respect to vaccine eligibility, which make it unclear for those administering vaccines to know which

set of guidelines to follow. For example, as of Feb. 4, California Department of Public Health states that teachers are eligible for vaccination, but CCHS does not yet offer vaccines to teachers at this time.

LW: When can teachers/school staff in Lamorinda be vaccinated?

CCHS: Contra Costa is evaluating when additional groups may become eligible for immunization in the county. It depends on the supply of vaccine to the county and our progress vaccinating currently eligible groups.

LW: Currently vaccines are for adults. Will there be a vaccine for kids in the future? Should teenagers get the current vaccines?

Dr. Min: The current recommendations are for those 16+ to receive Pfizer and 18+ for Moderna, but ongoing studies are looking at safety of these vaccines for kids so hopefully in the next few months we will get more information on safety in younger children.

LW: I heard that there is a limited supply of the vaccine. Is there a chance that it will run out in between my first and second dose?

CCHS: Anyone vaccinated in Contra Costa can either make an appointment for their second dose at the same time they make an appointment for their first dose or will receive the information they need to make a second-dose appointment when they receive their first dose.

LW: Would I be immune if I only got one dose?

Dr. Lin: Getting one dose will give you some immunity but getting two doses of the currently available vaccines is the best method for immunity. For the Pfizer vaccine, the first dose provides 52% immunity; the second dose takes efficacy to 95%. For the Moderna vaccine, the first dose provides 80.2%; the second dose 95.6%.

LW: If I have an underlying condition like diabetes, obesity, asthma, or high blood pressure, is it safe for me to take the vaccine? If I take blood pressure and/or cholesterol medication, does the vaccine impact that?

Dr. Lin: Yes, if you have an underlying health condition it is even more important to take the vaccine as you are at risk of getting sicker if you contract the virus. It is safe to take the vaccine even if you take blood pressure or cholesterol medication. If you take a blood thinner, we may need to hold pressure after administering the vaccine and some facilities may choose to monitor you for longer than the 15 minute requirement.

LW: Can I still carry and spread COVID-19 to others if I have the vaccine?

Dr. Lin: Yes, you can still be a carrier and transmit the virus even if you have finished the vaccine schedule. This is why it will still be necessary to wear a mask, social distance, and to practice hand hygiene to protect others and because the vaccine does not guarantee 100% immunity.

LW: How long am I immune once I take the vaccine?

Dr. Min: Nobody is certain how long immunity lasts after vaccination. Based on some research, there is hope that it will be multiple years, but the appearance of new variants complicates things.

LW: Is there anyone besides children who should not receive the COVID vaccine?

Dr. Lin: If you have a life threatening allergy or anaphylaxis to previous dose of COVID vaccine, polysorbate, or PEG polyethylene glycol. All of these reactions are extremely rare. Most people should get the vaccine including those with chronic conditions.

LW: Where can I go to get the most reliable information?

CCHS: Residents can visit the CCHS website for the latest information on COVID-19 (see below).

Note: information about the COVID-19 vaccine changes regularly. For the latest information, go to [www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/](http://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/).

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