DPH Announces Updated Plans for Administering Second Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine

DOVER (Jan. 28, 2021) – Today, the Division of Public Health (DPH) announced an updated approach to administering second doses in response to new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC announced Friday that an interval of 42 days between doses is acceptable, if adhering to the 21-day (Pfizer) and 28-day (Moderna) intervals is not possible.

Given extremely limited vaccine supply, DPH is recommending to vaccine partners that they schedule second doses between 28 and 35 days after the first dose is administered. This policy will enable the state to continue administering first doses to the vulnerable 65+ population at highest risk of hospitalization and death. The science shows that the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine provides 52% to 80% protection.

For context, the average flu vaccine, which is responsible for saving countless lives and hospitalizations, provides 40% to 60% protection. Delawareans who have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine are significantly better protected than their neighbors who haven't been vaccinated, even without the second dose. The state is committed to ensuring all Delawareans receive their second dose by Day 42, unless federal guidance recommends otherwise.

After a pause due to vaccine supply issues, the state and partners are resuming vaccinations for Phase 1A health care workers giving priority to Emergency Medical Services personnel, school nurses, and health care workers who provide patient care and are at highest risk of sustained close contact with infected individuals.

Doses are being delivered to county paramedic units by Friday and a vaccination event limited to emergency responders is being planned for Monday with appointments made through first responder agencies. DPH began working on Thursday with the County Paramedic Agencies, Delaware Fire Prevention Commission and the Police Chiefs Council to determine additional dates and locations as well. Additional Phase 1A individuals will be notified about opportunities to receive their second dose through their associations or through correspondence from the Division of Professional Regulation, once DPH has scheduled those events.

Second doses of the vaccine do not need to be administered by the same provider or at the same location as an individual's first dose, meaning as vaccines become more widely available so will options for where to get second doses. Some pharmacies and medical providers administering first dose vaccinations are scheduling second dose appointments, which they will keep as vaccine supplies allow.

However, it is important that all individuals who are vaccinated receive the same formulations of the vaccine for their second dose. In other words, those who received Moderna for the first dose should receive Moderna for their second dose. The same goes for the Pfizer vaccine. Vaccinated individuals are strongly encouraged to keep their vaccine card to ensure they know what vaccine they received and when.

DPH intends to provide second dose options for Phase 1B seniors who have been vaccinated in DPH events over the last two weekends as they reach the 28-35 day window. DPH will communicate with those individuals and schedule them for second doses using the CDC's VAMS appointment system that was used to schedule first doses, or for those who received their vaccination before the registration system went live, information will be provided on de.gov/covidvaccine or through community partners.

For the latest on Delaware's COVID-19 response, go to de.gov/coronavirus.