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Health officials launch new options to help seniors find COVID-19 vaccine information; urge patience as people 80 and older become eligible

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Feb. 8, 2021

Contact: OHA External Relations, orcovid19.media@dhsoha.state.or.us

Health officials launch new options to help seniors find COVID-19 vaccine information; urge patience as people 80 and older become eligible

(Salem – Feb. 8, 2021) The Oregon Health Authority piloted and launched a new "Get Vaccinated Oregon" tool today, as part of a multi-pronged effort to provide older adults information about COVID-19 vaccinations. Starting Monday February 8th, approximately 168,000 adults age 80 and older are now eligible to get a COVID-19 (though nearly 33,000 people age 80 or above have already been vaccinated). While vaccine supplies are expected to increase in coming weeks, supplies are currently scarce. State health officials asked for patience as more than 700,000 seniors age 65 and older become eligible for vaccines over the next four weeks.

With the new tool, older adults in Oregon have four primary ways to get linked to local vaccine information:

1. **Get Vaccinated Oregon** is an eligibility and notification tool developed by Google, in partnership with the state of Oregon. It can be found at Oregon's oregon.gov website, or at getvaccinated.oregon.gov . The tool allows users to answer basic questions to learn if they are eligible and get linked to information about vaccinations in their counties. Users can sign up for alerts to get notified about vaccination events or find out when they may become eligible.

2. **Vaccine Information chat bot** on the oregon.gov web site allows anyone to find out if they're eligible for a vaccine in Oregon or get answers to other questions about vaccines. The Vaccine Information chat bot also enables vaccine-eligible users who live in Clackamas, Columbia, Marion, Multnomah or Washington counties to schedule vaccine appointments through scheduling tools hosted by local health care providers. OHA developed and offered this scheduling feature in direct response to requests from health care providers in the region. The friendly Vaccine Information chat bot tool is an orange box that appears whenever a user accesses the covidvaccine.oregon.gov web site.

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3. **211**: Older Oregonians can also text ORCOVID to 898211 to get text/SMS updates about vaccination clinics (this option is available in English and Spanish only). Seniors can also email ORCOVID@211info.org. If you can't get your COVID-19 vaccine question answered on the website, by text, or by email, you can call 211 or 1-866-698-6155, which is open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, including holidays. Please be aware that wait times may be long due to high call volumes. As Governor Brown announced on Friday, the Oregon National Guard will help 211 answer phone calls, starting by the end of the day on February 8.

4. **Licensed senior facilities**: Residents and staff at most licensed facilities for older adults and people with disabilities are receiving on-site vaccinations through pharmacies enrolled in federal vaccination programs. Residents (or family members) can ask their facility operator when their residence is scheduled for a vaccination clinic.

In addition, Oregon has opted into a federal retail pharmacy program that will offer seniors the option to get vaccinated at 133 retail locations across the state, but that program will not be available starting on Monday. State health officials are awaiting additional information from the federal government about when vaccine shipments will arrive at participating retail pharmacies.

Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen said, "We're working hard to help our local vaccination partners keep seniors informed about vaccination events in their counties. In coming days, we know there will be more demand for vaccinations and for answers to questions than we may be able to provide. My promise to older Oregonians is this: if you want a vaccination, you will get one. But it may not be tomorrow, this week or even two weeks from now. But you will get one. And every Oregonian will get a vaccine sooner and more easily if we are patient, wait our turn and make sure others who go before us get their chance."

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