

Three Rivers Pandemic Update

04/19/2021

Pandemic status: The US is in plateau, regional surges continue

- Case numbers across the United States are fluctuating; the current case rate in the US is about 72,000/day 7 day rolling average. About half the states continue to report increasing case rates. There are hot spots in the upper Midwest, New England, some southern and some western states. Case rates across many European countries are fluctuating as well.
- Virginia is relatively stable, our case rate remains about 1500/day 7 day average.
- Three Rivers appears stable; our new case rate is averaging about 20 - 25 new cases/day, 7 day average.
- In Virginia, about 40% of us have received at least one dose of the vaccine. In Three Rivers, about 46% of our population has received at least one dose. 74% of our Three Rivers residents aged 65+ have received at least one dose.

Vaccination Program Update: Virginia is preparing to move to Phase 2 of the vaccination campaign

- Virginia transitioned to phase 2 on April 18. For details of vaccination phases, please visit this website: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine/#phase1b>
- Three Rivers Health District advanced to phase 2 on Monday, 12 April.
- Three Rivers vaccinating partners will continue to reach out by phone or email to anyone eligible in phase 1 who preregistered in Three Rivers for a vaccination opportunity until everyone has been called or emailed with a vaccination opportunity. We expect to complete our call back effort from initial preregistration by early this week.
- Our Three Rivers vaccination system is currently delivering over 4,600 COVID 19 vaccinations per week, combined first and second doses. At our current pace, we are on track to vaccinate 75% of the eligible adult population of Three Rivers by late May, assuming we get the population uptake we need. Vaccine demand is dramatically falling, however.
- The Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the Virginia Department of Health have set up Community Vaccination Centers (CVCs), staffed by commercial vendors, and prioritized by an equity formula driven by age, elevated health risk, income levels, and demonstrated risk to communities of color. In general, they have a scalable 3,000 person per day capability. We are not scheduled to be considered for a commercially staffed Community Vaccination Center in Three Rivers, and at this point we do not see any need for one.
- There is a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Supplemental Allocation Vaccination Effort (SAVE) site is open and operating in Norfolk at the Military Circle Mall. This site is open 7 days a week, 9AM to 7PM and available to all people 16 years and over seeking COVID 19 vaccination. Children 16-17 are eligible but must be

accompanied by a parent or guardian and provide proof of age such as a driver's license or birth certificate.

- Our nursing staff continues providing first doses to essential frontline workers and vulnerable populations, and our Point of Dispensing teams (PODs) are following up with second dose and doing some first dose events. We have EMS/Health Department collaborative vaccination clinics in Essex and Westmoreland counties operating at 100 first dose/day capacity; we are working to establish this capability in multiple jurisdictional level going forward, with opportunities for vaccination appointments weekly.
- We are doing very well with our vaccination program in Three Rivers. We are focusing more vaccination efforts towards King William, King and Queen, Richmond and Westmoreland Counties; these jurisdictions remain our least vaccinated areas. The jurisdictional vaccination data can be reviewed here:
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-summary/>
- The Federal Retail Pharmacy Partnership phase 2 is proceeding in Virginia. WalMart, Rite Aid, Walgreens, CVS, Kroger, Main Street, Mathews, White Stone and Tappahannock pharmacies in or near Three Rivers are delivering vaccinations through the federal retail partnership, including Johnson and Johnson doses. You can find vaccination locations at www.vaccinefinder.org

Details of Phase 2 Transition

- People eligible for COVID 19 vaccination seeking a vaccination appointment can contact their health care providers for initial consultation. The vaccine is now available in many clinical practice settings.
- During phase 2, we will finish working through the preregistration lists and then shift to establishing standing vaccination clinics for several weeks in advance. We published links to available clinics this week that can be accessed through vaccinate.virginia.gov. We intend to use the new VASE (Vaccine Appointment Scheduling Engine) system, developed by the VDH in recent weeks to establish and manage appointments. People should visit www.vaccinefinder.org to be able to search for vaccination clinics near them. They can also call 1-877-VAX-IN-VA to get help finding an appointment and registering for one. The call center will prioritize all people eligible in phase 1 and refer them to the districts for appointments as soon as possible. The call center will remain open from 8AM – 8PM 7 days a week to answer questions and offer appointment assistance. Appointments will be available on line through vaccinate.virginia.gov 24/7.
- Pharmacies are already using Vaccine Finder; Health Care Systems and medical practices will initially concentrate on their remaining patients eligible in phase 2, and may participate in Vaccine Finder as phase 2 progresses to completion.
- Virginia is placing a great deal of emphasis on equitable distribution of the vaccine, and has hired consultant firms to help reach communities of color to promote vaccine

acceptance. As demand for vaccination falls, which is already happening in many areas of the Commonwealth, we will see increasing outreach efforts to vaccine hesitant populations and communities.

- We think we will reach 60-65% of the target population; getting to 75% vaccination levels, which is necessary to ensure herd immunity, will be very difficult.

Vaccine development and virus update

- All three available vaccine types are available across the Commonwealth (Johnson and Johnson vaccine administration has been temporarily suspended). Public health authorities recommend taking the first vaccination opportunity afforded to us regardless of manufacturer; there is no guarantee any of the available vaccines will prevent infection, although evidence is growing that they effectively do so in many people. They are all very effective in preventing serious and critical COVID 19 disease, and can turn a life threatening infection into a much less serious health threat. All available vaccines are probably effective in reducing viral transmission potential in the event of infection as well.
- The COVID 19 virus continues to genetically drift.
 - The United Kingdom, South African, and Brazilian variants are all in the United States now. All three strains have been detected in Virginia; all have been detected in the Eastern Region. The UK strain is now dominant in the US.
 - Comparable variants with similar mutations have also emerged in California, New York, and other areas of the United States.
 - These strains are more contagious; hospitalization rates are rising and the hospitalized people are younger. Local hospitals also report an uptick in COVID 19 cases.
 - Vaccine effectiveness against these strains continues to be evaluated; it appears our existing vaccine is very effective against the UK strain. Proceeding with vaccination is strongly recommended for all of us.
 - Wearing more efficient masks, such as the KN-95 mask, or double masking, has emerged as a recommendation to protect against these more contagious strains.
 - We are in a race to vaccinate people as fast as we can to drive case levels down if possible. The higher the case levels in the population, the more opportunity exists for the virus to continue to drift. Protective measures such as masking and social distancing remain very important.
 - Johnson and Johnson vaccine usage in the US has been paused due to a particular kind of blood clot that has developed in 7 young women, characterized by low platelet counts. This is similar to the blood clots seen in a number of patients in Europe with the AstraZeneca vaccine. Both these vaccines use an adenovirus vector as opposed to mRNA. In the US, the clots have been in the cerebral venous sinus. This may be an autoimmune reaction,

where antibodies are produced against elements of the blood clotting mechanism. It is characterized by low platelet counts along with the clot.

- The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met and recommended the pause continue until more data is obtained and analyzed. This has not been a major impediment to our vaccination program in Virginia yet, we are pressing on with doses of Moderna and Pfizer vaccine.
- The impact of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine pause on vaccine hesitancy is to be determined, we will watch this carefully going forward.
- Moderna and Pfizer are conducting pediatric clinical trials, and Janssen is conducting a clinical trial in adolescents. Pfizer requested Emergency Use Authorization from the FDA on Friday, March 9, to extend use of its vaccine to 12-15 year olds. We anticipate vaccine availability for school age children by this fall or sooner; we will need to conduct another vaccination campaign to make the fall school terms safer.
- Persons who have had COVID 19 disease can seek vaccination after their isolation period ends, and after their symptoms, including fever, have resolved. While the vaccine remains in short supply, people recovered from recent COVID 19 infections may elect to temporarily postpone vaccination with the understanding that immunity from natural infection may decrease over time.
- After receiving COVID 19 vaccination, public health authorities are recommending we all continue masking, maintaining social distancing and avoiding crowded areas after being vaccinated.
 - The vaccine may not prevent all COVID 19 infections
 - Public health authorities will let us know when it is safe to relax protective measures. This will occur when case numbers in the population fall to very low levels.
 - The CDC has published Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People; those recommendations can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

How to volunteer with the Three Rivers Health District

- The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), our volunteers, are absolutely critical to our efforts at all times. We are extremely grateful for our volunteers, we could not carry on this pandemic mitigation effort without them.
- If you are interested in becoming an MRC volunteer, or have family or friends that are interested, please visit www.vamrc.org to learn more.
- If you have questions about the process, please reach out to the Three Rivers Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator at 804-758-2381 x 14. We welcome your help and participation in the fight against COVID 19.

Testing, pandemic containment efforts

- Community testing and testing in response to vulnerable facility outbreaks can be requested by facilities and jurisdictions by using commercial firms on contract with the Commonwealth of Virginia or the Virginia National Guard.
- Continued testing will remain very important in the coming months.
- Our containment team is investigating all new cases with contact tracing of all high risk exposures; this capability is completely intact.
- Our Executive Order Compliance team continues with full capability and activity.

K-12 School Status: More students have returned for in-person learning

- The CDC published comprehensive K-12 school guidance based on latest evidence concerning viral transmission in children and adolescents and on the experience base gained during school operations over the past year. The guidance, which facilitates return to in-person learning, leverages the protective measures we have had in place all year and is tied to levels of community transmission. The guidance stipulates universal and correct use of masks, maintaining at least 3 feet of physical distancing, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, and maintaining effective case investigation/contact tracing in cooperation with local health departments. The detailed CDC school guidance can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>
- The VDH and VDOE have also revised guidance concerning school operations. The VDH/VDOE language emphasizes the benefit of 6 feet as standard practice, but accepts 3-6 feet of social distancing with masking if 6 feet cannot be maintained with a full return to in person learning, at all levels of community transmission.
- The VDH is piloting a COVID 19 school testing program this spring, to enhance safety and confidence for in-person school attendance. This program may expand in the fall.
- Sports teams are an area of interest and higher risk; since high school sports began in the spring term, several outbreaks involving sports teams have occurred. We will cooperate with schools in case identification, contact tracing and quarantine activities to help mitigate the effects of sports related outbreaks.
- As of last week, we have experienced COVID 19 cases among students in 8 of our jurisdictions in Three Rivers. Evidence is emerging that children are playing a larger role in transmission of the COVID 19 variants. We are watching this carefully.

Useful links

- The FDA fact sheets for recipients and caregivers for the Pfizer vaccine can be found here: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download>

- The FDA fact sheet for recipients and caregivers for the Moderna vaccine can be found here: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144638/download>
- The FDA fact sheet for recipients and caregivers for the Johnson and Johnson vaccine can be found here: <https://www.fda.gov/media/146305/download>
- The VDH vaccination phase by health district can be found here: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine/phase-by-health-district/>
- The Virginia Department of Health is maintaining COVID-19 Vaccination Dashboards, which are available here: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines-received/> and here: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-summary/>
- The VDH COVID 19 outbreak dashboard can be found here: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-data-insights/>