

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH COMMISSIONER



Dear Community Members:

Why is it so hard to find a COVID-19 vaccine? How do I get in line? If I'm on a waiting list, why are there others becoming eligible every week? These are the most frequent questions we hear at the Health Department. The arrival of the vaccine has certainly been exciting, but it's also been confusing for everyone involved as well. As part of my commitment to keeping community members informed, I hope this information helps answer some questions and concerns.

This vaccine is a worldwide commodity. The United States has a limited amount to distribute, and once Ohio receives its weekly allocation, there are decisions made on where and how those doses are distributed. In the beginning, Ohio set-aside 353,000 doses for nursing home/assisted living residents and staff. The remaining weekly allocation was split 70/30 with hospitals and health departments. This was done to protect the most vulnerable quickly and also to immunize front line medical staff. The doses that came to Medina County Health Department in those early weeks went to EMS, nurse vaccinators at the Health Department, selected groups homes, and frontline medical workers identified by the Ohio Department of Health. It was an honor to protect workers exposed to COVID, but it's a relief to be at the point of vaccinating the most vulnerable individuals in our county.

Prolonged illness and death, while rare for younger residents, is a more serious concern for those who are older and with underlying conditions. With the release of vaccine for Phase 1B, the Health Department has protected 220 individuals with developmental disabilities and congenital conditions along with 1,400 residents 75 years of age and older. There are clinics scheduled this week for an additional 840 residents over the age of 70.

Decisions on eligibility groups are being made to accommodate all of Ohio, encompassing counties big and small. There are counties where it's easier to move to younger ages quickly because the numbers are smaller or the desire to receive the vaccine is lower. Those counties need to have the ability to receive and move their vaccine, while counties like ours that are larger may take longer within an age group. Counties much larger than Medina are still balancing medical staff in 1A with age group 1B vaccinations.

In addition to the Health Department, there are 15 locations with vaccine in the county. I know that searching across several locations can be frustrating, but the State of Ohio made the decision to send doses to over 700 locations throughout Ohio in attempt to make the distribution more equitable. Each provider has their own method for enrolling and setting an appointment.

We opted to take telephone registrations for those 80 years and older. For other age groups in 1B, we are using the ArmorVax app to find and schedule your own appointment. This is for Health Department doses only and does not include other providers. It shows available appointments only when vaccine is confirmed for your age group. I know it has been frustrating to not see clinics yet, but for the first few weeks all of our clinics were by paper. There is a high demand for vaccine among our 80 and over residents so until this week, clinics run by the Health Department have been for this age group only. We hope moving forward, we will receive larger amounts of vaccine and more clinics will be available through the app. We have resources on our website to help navigate ArmorVax. We will always have a phone request option for those without internet access.

Where can I find the latest information?

As information is made available, we will continue to update our website with resources about the vaccine: medinahealth.org/vaccine.