

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WEST PIEDMONT HEALTH DISTRICT ENTERS PHASE 1B BUT VACCINE IS IN SHORT SUPPLY

The West Piedmont Health District entered COVID-19 vaccination Phase 1b today and has been working hard to get the vaccine to our residents as quickly as we can. Our health district, along with the rest of the state, is seeing much higher demand for the vaccine than the doses the Commonwealth is receiving from the federal government.

“We are working on as many alternatives as possible to make the vaccine available,” said Kerry Gateley, M.D., MPH, CPE, director of the West Piedmont Health District. “The health district will continue to request COVID-19 vaccine weekly, but how many doses actually will be received is uncertain. We ask for patience as we gather more information about how much vaccine we can anticipate in the weeks to come.”

Once the vaccine is available, those eligible to receive it include police, fire, teachers, mail carriers and other essential workers whose jobs ensure continuity of government operations. Also, anyone age 65 or over or 16-64 with a documented medical condition putting you at risk of severe infection is included in Phase 1b. Individuals who qualify for the vaccine will be notified of the time and place they will be vaccinated, but a significant wait time may occur until the supply of vaccine available increases.

“Many Phase 1b recipients will get their vaccine through their workplace and do not need to seek vaccine independently,” Gateley said. Smaller and independent businesses, individuals 65 years old and up, and anyone not affiliated with a workplace clinic may add their names to the vaccine list. Instructions on how to do so will be released next week.

“Until then, we ask for the public’s patience,” Gateley said. “This is a huge undertaking, and our staff and partners are working diligently to make the vaccination process as smooth as possible.”

Gateley explained that many community partners are working together to ensure that vaccines are available. Carilion Franklin Memorial Hospital and Sovah Health - Martinsville have been vaccinating phase 1a personnel since the first phase.

In the meantime, it is important to remain vigilant in COVID-19 prevention. Continue to protect yourself and others: cover your mouth and nose with a mask, wash your hands often and well, stay at least six feet away from others, avoid gatherings with anyone who is not a member of your household and get a flu shot.

Information about the vaccine and when it will be available locally will be available on the West Piedmont Health District’s webpage and Facebook pages and by recorded message on phone lines at each health department.

- Franklin County Health Department – (540) 484-0292
- Henry Martinsville Health Department – (276) 638-2311
- Patrick County Health Department – (275) 639-2070

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