

COVID-19 VACCINATION: INFORMATION FOR WILLOW BROOK EMPLOYEES

We're excited to share with you that Willow Brook staff members and residents will have access to the COVID-19 vaccine before the general public. The first phase of vaccines is being made available to healthcare staff and people most at-risk, including residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Below are responses to some frequently asked questions:

Is the virus mandated for staff and residents? No, Willow Brook is not mandating the vaccine for its residents or staff, **but it is strongly encouraged.** By taking the vaccine, you are protecting not only yourself, but you are helping to protect others, including our most vulnerable residents.

Which vaccine are we going to get? We will get the Pfizer vaccine, and it will be administered by CVS/Omnicare. This is a two-step vaccine with the second dose given three weeks after the first.

How will I receive the vaccine? CVS will set up a vaccine clinic on-site at Willow Brook. We don't have a date yet, but we believe it will be near the week of Dec. 21.

Is the vaccine safe? Willow Brook's medical director, Dr. Peter Hucek, believes in the safety of the vaccine and that the benefits outweigh any risk, especially for anyone who is high risk. So far, studies have monitored nearly 50,000 people over several months after the vaccination. Doctors and researchers haven't seen anyone with dangerous side effects. The Food and Drug Administration is expected to approve the vaccine very soon.

What will I need to do to get the vaccine? You'll need to complete a consent form and provide your insurance information prior to the clinic date. We've been told there is no cost, but your insurance will be billed an administrative fee. If you have no insurance, there will be no cost to the employee.

Can we believe that a COVID-19 immunization will work? Medical professionals say that these vaccines will clearly prevent life-threatening complications or death from COVID-19. The trials of the new COVID-19 vaccine have been very successful.

What if I already had COVID-19? Doctors still strongly encourage you to get the vaccine even if you already had the virus. Your infection may offer some natural immunity, but no one knows how long that natural protection lasts or what risks you have if you get it again.

How does the vaccine work? First, the vaccine won't give you COVID-19. The vaccine is not made with the live virus. It is made with proteins that force your body to have an immune response so that your body recognizes and fights the actual virus when you are exposed to it.

What are the possible side effects of the vaccine? The vaccine tested in clinical trials can cause mild, short-term discomfort such as headache, muscle pains, fatigue, fever and pain at the injection site, similar to side effects from the flu vaccine.

Where can I learn more? If you have questions, please contact your supervisor. You can also learn more at this website: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html

MESSAGE FROM LARRY HARRIS, CEO THE COVID-19 VACCINE & WILLOW BROOK

The COVID virus has been unkind to us. In the past ten months, we have experienced outbreaks at all three Willow Brooks. Nineteen residents have died and 90 staff members been infected – some seriously. Resident activities and family visits have been severely curtailed, leaving our people to sit alone in their rooms or apartments for long intervals. The virus has inflicted much pain and sadness on this ministry.

But help is on the way. If federal approval comes as expected, vaccinations will soon be available to us. It was inspiring to me to see the 90- year-old woman from the United Kingdom receive the world's first fully tested injection. She is the light at the end of this long, scary tunnel.

I can hardly wait for the day when we no longer live in fear of infection, illness, and, yes, even death, simply by coming to work.

The three Willow Brooks are in the first tier of priority vaccinations. You and our residents are considered most at risk, so we are first in line. In this respect, we are the lucky ones. Others will have to wait many weeks or months for their turn.

Several have expressed reservations about taking the vaccine. That is understandable. Is it safe? Was there enough time to do full testing? The answers from independent experts are yes and yes. Each manufacturer has used 30,000 to 60,000 test subjects – brave volunteers who allowed the injections in their arms. And they all lived to talk about it.

And I don't mean to place too much confidence in the words of a single man, but Dr. Anthony Fauci, the disease expert you often see on TV, is vouching for the safety of the vaccines. Watching him almost nightly for these past few months, I have come to trust him. He is one of the world's premier experts on infectious diseases, and I just don't believe he would mislead us or state something he truly didn't believe. So once that federal approval comes, I'm all in.

Willow Brook is not mandating that you get vaccinated, but think what will happen if you don't. If many of your coworkers join you in turning down this opportunity, the virus danger will persist at Willow Brook long into the future. You will be at risk every day you

come to work, or go to Kroger, or church, or a birthday party. You will be wearing your mask and suiting up in PPE for a long time. And, you will be putting your coworkers and residents at continued risk.

Like you, Janet and I are so very tired of this pandemic. We missed a family Thanksgiving. We have a little granddaughter that we have held only once since her birth in August. The masks, the distancing, the handwashing – we're just tired. But hope is on the way. It won't be much longer if we all step forward and roll up our sleeves. Watch for details soon.

Larry