

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Thursday, March 9, 2021.

Along with a slight improvement in the weather, the Jefferson County COVID-19 forecast is almost sunny. The last new reported case was one week ago today, March 3, and the number has held at 336. Thirty nine people are awaiting results, and there is just one person in active isolation.

During his regular Monday briefing to the County Commissioners, health officer Dr. Tom Locke attributed the decrease to social distancing, increased antibodies and vaccination numbers. (Currently, 14% of county residents are fully vaccinated. That compares to a statewide total of 9%.)

Those vaccinated need to continue social distancing protocols, but there is some good news. Two weeks after the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine, or two weeks after the single dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine people can safely gather indoors with other fully vaccinated people with no restrictions and no masking, according to the CDC. Additionally, you may also gather indoors with unvaccinated individuals who are at low risk of having severe COVID-19 complications.

While the Tri Area Pharmacy in Port Hadlock has acquired doses of the new Johnson and Johnson vaccine for educators, Jefferson Healthcare has no immediate plans to offer that particular vaccine. The hospital has the storage and operation capacity to administer the Pfizer vaccine. And while the hospital provides the easiest path for locals to become inoculated, a website post encourages everyone to accept the vaccine that is made available to them.

The hospital's "When is it My Turn?" website link (<https://jeffersonhealthcare.org/covid-19-vaccine/>) collects names for contact when there is an available appointment. People 65 and older are now in the queue, along with county residents 50 years old and older living in multi-generational household, along with K-12 school employees and childcare providers.

The hospital schedules both doses at the same time, so if you received the first dose at another facility the hospital will not accommodate a second dose.

And there are still a few computer glitches, where people who are qualified are not allowed to proceed through the signup process. If that happens to you just try again later, or sign in with a different device.

A more serious glitch occurred last week, when the hospital underdosed 36 patients on March 4. According to a post on the hospital's website it quickly detected, addressed and resolved the source of the problem and, since the source was a change from our usual vaccination preparation process, determined it was an isolated event. An underdosed vaccination poses no harm to the patient; however, we want to ensure all patients have the proper therapeutic level of vaccine. The best way to accomplish this is to complete a blood test 21 days after vaccination, which measures the level of COVID-19 immunity antibodies being generated in the body. If the antibody test indicates immunity activity, the patient received a proper dose. If it does not, the patient may receive a third dose.

Also yesterday, Director of Emergency Management Willie Bence said Jefferson Healthcare is at “just about their full capacity for being able to administer a vaccine” and they’re doing both first and second doses this week for about 350 people a day, six days a week.

This Saturday, the Department of Emergency Management is doing a dress rehearsal in Chimacum for the mass vaccination event tentatively scheduled for March 21. If and when it occurs, this will be the first in a series of high-volume vaccinations planned for the next few months. Stay tuned here for further information. The plan is for the first event to be a slow start, with subsequent events offering higher volumes as they get more experience.

Volunteer opportunities now exist for clinic operation. Those with active or inactive medical training are the most desired, but help is needed for such tasks as greeting patients, traffic control and monitoring the recently vaccinated for side effects. Those with skills to offer and time to help out should send an email to jcdem@co.jefferson.wa.us.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org.

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.