INFORMATION ON COVID-19 VACCINES

APPROVAL AND SAFETY:
➢ COVID-19 vaccine approval requires four phases of testing on tens of thousands of people and must meet very intense safety criteria before completing each phase. **Safety is the most important requirement for approval**.
➢ FDA authorizes emergency vaccine use only when the expected benefits outweigh potential risks and vaccine use is needed quickly to save lives during an urgent health crisis. The Moderna vaccine is approved for those 18 years of age or above.
➢ While authorizing emergency use is a shorter process, no steps are skipped in the safety evaluation process. Approval can still take weeks and the FDA will re-evaluate the numbers and data to ensure the calculations are correct.
➢ FDA requires 50% efficacy of vaccine in preventing COVID-19 (current vaccines exhibit 94-95% efficacy).
➢ There are two independent advisory committees that advise the CDC. The committees will evaluate the vaccine data for safety and efficacy, and also help to determine how it will be distributed.
➢ *Vaccines cannot give you COVID-19.* **Vaccines contain material from the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 and do not contain live or killed particles.**
➢ The goal is to give your body the tools to fight COVID-19 effectively and/or prevent you from getting it at all.

DOSES:
➢ Requires two doses to be effective, given about 3-4 weeks apart. This is to make sure your body has enough antibodies to fight COVID-19. The first shot primes the immune system, helping it recognize the virus, and the second shot strengthens the immune response. Protection usually occurs about two weeks after the second shot.
➢ Getting two doses within 3-4 weeks has been shown to be safe.
➢ Similar to the flu vaccine, shots for COVID-19 may be needed on a regular basis.
➢ It is important and safe to also get your flu shot (you can get both the flu and COVID-19 at the same time).

BENEFITS:
➢ While no vaccine is 100% effective, these vaccines are anticipated to be more than 90% effective. **This will greatly reduce your risk of getting sick with COVID-19 and spreading COVID-19 to your loved ones**.
➢ Reducing your risk of COVID-19 is critical as it is a serious infection that has a wide range of symptoms, ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness, and even death. Even after recovery, there is potential for long-term health issues.

POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS/RISKS:
➢ The vaccines can cause short-term discomfort (such as headache, muscle pains, fatigue, chills, fever, and pain at injection site). Most side effects occur within 6 weeks of administration and resolve within one day to one week.
➢ These effects are your body developing immunity by creating antibodies to fight off the virus. When you receive the second dose of the vaccine, the discomfort can be more pronounced. This is a normal reaction.
➢ If you experience discomfort after the first dose of the vaccine, it is very important that you still receive the second dose a few weeks later for the vaccine to be effective.
➢ The FDA and CDC are continuing to monitor safety to make sure any long-term side effects are identified.
➢ A person can be infected with COVID-19 when they get the vaccine, but are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic. If they later have symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive for it, it does not mean they got COVID-19 from the vaccine.

AFTER THE VACCINE:
➢ **You will not be immediately protected from COVID-19 and will need to continue wearing masks, social distance and practice frequent hand hygiene.**
➢ Even though you have received your vaccine, most of the people around you have not. Widespread vaccination and immunity will likely take months.
➢ The vaccines prevent disease in the vaccinated person, but it still may be possible to transmit the disease to others until the vaccine is in widespread use.