

## Resources & Equipment

### Potential vaccine could be in Idaho soon

Today's announcement by Pfizer and BioNTech SE about their COVID-19 vaccine being more successful than originally anticipated and that they are nearing the point of requesting an EUA (emergency use authorization) from the FDA was welcome news as cases in Idaho and the US continue to surge.

The two-dose vaccine is based on messenger RNA, which uses genetic material to get cells to produce proteins that mimic the virus. The body's immune system learns to attack those cells and should, according to the producers, cause the body to attack any actual infection.

The manufacturers estimate that they will have the appropriate data and safety information ready later this month to meet the FDA's guidance for requesting an EUA. The FDA advisory committee has committed to reviewing and making a recommendation on any EUA requests within two weeks of their filing. The vaccine would then be considered for approval by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) within 24 hours.

The Pfizer vaccine requires extreme cold storage and must be stored in devices set at -75° C. Currently, there are only two of these units in Idaho that have this capability for a large shipment of the vaccine. However, it has been noted that a single tray, which holds 975 doses, is about the size of a pizza box and can be stored in countertop extreme cold freezers.

States are being given the option of pre-positioning initial shipments of the vaccine while waiting for final approval from the CDC or waiting until after the approval and allowing the vaccine to be shipped directly to providers. The Governor's COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee met Friday and is recommending the state accept a pre-positioning shipment of the vaccine once it receives an FDA EUA. The Advisory Committee will continue to discuss priorities for early distribution of the vaccine once it is available.

## Quality & Patient Safety

### It's our turn to protect veterans from a new enemy – COVID-19

by Governor Brad Little

America's veterans have gone to war for centuries to protect us from enemies overseas.

They have endured loss of friends, loss of limbs, and loss of mental and emotional security to protect us.

Now our veterans need us.

They need us to protect them from a new enemy stealing lives right here in our state – the COVID-19 virus.

At least half of Idaho's veterans are at-risk of serious health complications or death if they contract COVID-19.

Last week, we directed \$2 million in federal relief dollars to help the Idaho State Veterans Home in Boise battle a COVID-19 outbreak that is taking veterans' lives and leaving them in isolation.

The Veterans Hospital in Boise, too, is overrun with COVID-19 patients and too many VA healthcare workers are out sick, unable to care for these veterans.

Similar stories are playing out in hospitals and long-term care facilities statewide.

Our veterans bravely encountered bullets and bombs so that you can have the freedom to control your own actions.

And your personal actions are the one and only thing that will defend our veterans from succumbing to the enemy virus.

We won't celebrate and honor the brave men and women of the armed forces on Veterans Day this year like we usually do. I am hopeful we will be able to pick up those meaningful events next year.

This year, in addition to offering prayers and kind words to our veterans on Veterans Day, make this minor sacrifice: help slow the spread of this dangerous virus by keeping your distance from others, wearing a mask, and washing your hands frequently.

Our veterans need us to get tough and put up with these minor inconveniences for a relatively short period of time so they can have a fighting chance against the COVID-19 enemy that is rapidly advancing on them.

Our veterans have more life to live. We need to keep them alive so we can continue to honor them and learn from their sacrifices.

Let's use the freedom our veterans earned for us and choose to do the right thing to protect them from COVID-19.

### Long hauls are not just for truck drivers

*"There's no question that there are a considerable number of individuals who have a postviral syndrome that really, in many respects, can incapacitate them for weeks and weeks following so-called recovery and clearing of the virus."*

*– Anthony Fauci, MD, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, COVID-19 webinar organized by the International AIDS Society.*

Approximately 1 in 10 people who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 suffer long-term COVID-19 related symptoms well beyond the approximate three weeks of COVID-19 illness. At present, as many as 7,200 Idahoans of the over 72,000 who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 could fall into this "long hauler" category.

Post-acute COVID-19 has a range of clinical presentations, which have been **grouped into two broad categories**: presentations of serious sequelae, and patients whose symptoms are non-specific, e.g. coughing, shortness of breath, ongoing and sometimes extreme fatigue, body aches and joint pain, headaches, difficulty sleeping. Long haulers also report loss of taste and smell, even if this did not occur during the acute phase of illness, and being particularly forgetful, confused or unable to concentrate – colloquially termed "brain fog."

Although it is unclear why some patients experience a prolonged recovery from COVID-19, some of the proposed causes include persistent viremia due to a weak immune response, inflammatory immune responses, and psychological factors such as post-traumatic stress disorder. **Additional emerging data** about long haulers indicate that they are more commonly women than men, at a rate of 4 to 1, and range in age from 18 to 84.

Clinical guidelines on the management of post-acute COVID-19 are being developed. A recent publication in the British Medical Journal emphasized holistic support to manage symptoms without "over-investigation" of the patient. These recommendations include a **post-COVID-19 functional scale which is being validated** and focused on assessment in a post-acute care setting.

As we learn about COVID-19 and life after a COVID-19 diagnosis, it is important to recognize and remember that COVID-19 can result in prolonged illness among previously healthy individuals – and even among those who were not hospitalized during the acute phase of their illness.



St. Luke's Health System in Boise has been sharing videos featuring front line workers on their [YouTube channel](#). These short videos are designed to show, first-hand, the extreme stresses our hospital heroes are under trying to care for the ever-increasing number of hospitalized COVID patients while encouraging Idahoans to do their part.

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