

To our Kearny County Community:

Good news again, we continue to have only a handful of new COVID-19 cases over the past few weeks in the county. Our overall vaccination response throughout the community has been very positive thus far. However, we still need to get many more eligible individuals vaccinated in order to reach our county goal of 70-80%. Many people have asked me why he or she should get the vaccine, and here is my response. "It is safe, effective, and important."

1. Safe: The data for the Moderna, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines shows overwhelming safety in the vaccine. It does not cause respiratory infection, it does not cause infertility, it is not a source of population control... to name a few concerns that I have heard. It commonly may result in a sore arm for a few days, and less commonly may result in fatigue, headache, or mild fever that lasts for a short time.

2. Effective: "Real world" data thus far has confirmed the efficacy of the vaccines. Even in the face of variants, it has been essentially 100% effective against severe COVID-19 illness, and 90+% effective against all COVID-19 infection. The rare individuals who have had COVID-19 after being vaccinated have had very mild courses of illness.

3. Important: This is the hardest one to explain, but quite possibly the most important one to understand. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine benefits you as well as our community. First, it protects you from severe COVID-19 illness. We have seen the range of severity of COVID-19 illness over this past year in young and old, healthy and frail, known exposure and unknown exposure. We have not been able to predict who gets severely ill and who does not. As I said above, getting the vaccine protects you from severe COVID-19 illness essentially 100%. Second, we have also begun to see something that we call post-COVID-19 sequelae, even in those who initially had mild symptoms. These sequelae (after effects or the infection) are lasting for 3 months or more and include shortness of breath with minimal exertion, ongoing cough, heart injury, ongoing taste / smell dysfunction, severe fatigue, joint aches and pains, even depression just to name a few. Getting the vaccine importantly protects you from the longer term effects of COVID-19 that we do not yet understand. Finally, getting the vaccine is important to our community as a whole. Many of you were at the Easter Egg hunt at the golf course last weekend. We are beginning to be able to resume normal community activities like this one. However, a resurgence of COVID-19 will slow this progress towards normal. The best way that we can maintain a return to normal is to get vaccinated.

If you have further questions, please call the health department or your health care provider. Please call the health department or Lakin Drug in order to be scheduled for your immunization if you haven't received your vaccine yet and are 18 years or older. As always, let's continue to work together to eliminate COVID-19 from Kearny County.

Stay healthy,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Drew Miller" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Drew Miller, MD, FAAFP  
Kearny County Health Officer