

Weather Record							
Date	12-29	12-30	12-31	1-1	1-2	1-3	1-4
High	42.7	63.5	41.5	71.4	44.2	-----	-----
Low	24.9	34.5	34.4	56.9	62.6	-----	-----
Prec	0	0.17	0.54	0.76	0	-----	-----

Reporting period for each day runs from midnight to midnight. Statistics from Kentucky Mesonet's Bengal Station.

Greensburg Record-Herald

B
Section

4 Pages, Greensburg Record-Herald, Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Beshear says people 70 and older will be in next phase

By AL CROSS
KENTUCKY HEALTH NEWS

If you're 70 or older and live in Kentucky, you may be able to get vaccinated against the novel coronavirus in about a month.

That will be a younger threshold than in most states, because Covid-19 deaths in Kentucky are disproportionately among residents of nursing homes, Health Commissioner Steven Stack said as he and Gov. Andy Beshear laid out the second phase of vaccinations in the state.

The second phase will include people 70 and older, K-12 educators, and first responders who were not included in the first phase, which is for residents of long-term-care facilities, facility employees and other health-care workers who work in places where care is provided.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended to states that the second round include workers key to the function of society, including teachers, police officers, firefighters and grocery workers, and people over 75.

Kentucky will use a threshold of 70, Stack said, because "We have such a disproportionate burden of death"

among older people. He said 68 percent of Kentucky's Covid-19 fatalities have been nursing-home residents, while the national share is 40%.

Beshear said the second phase, officially called Phase 1b, will begin Feb. 1, "plus or minus a week," depending on availability of vaccines, and will take most of February.

The next step, Phase 1c, would be for people 65 and older, essential workers not included in the first two phases, and those 16 and over who have high-risk medical conditions. Stack said the latter group is "staggeringly enormous," numbering 110 million nationally. Kentucky has a larger percentage of high-risk individuals than the national average.

With only 50 million doses of vaccines expected to be available in the U.S. by March 1, Stack said, "There's not enough to get to all these people by March," so the state will have to determine subgroups and their priorities. "If they weren't further subdivided, there's no way we'd get through these in a reasonable and orderly fashion."

Beshear said, "We're building the airplane while we're flying it. I'm sure there are going to be mistakes all around." He added later, "The virtue I've

got to ask everybody to show is patience, and its going to be harder and harder and harder" as time goes on. "Please have patience; I know we're doing the best that we can."

The first known misstep in Kentucky's vaccination plans came on Christmas Eve, when two Walgreens pharmacies in Louisville and Lexington made the Pfizer Inc. vaccine available to the general public after the company thawed too many doses for nursing homes, which it serves under a federal contract.

Beshear said he didn't know how many doses were involved, but said the company should have taken them to the next nursing homes on its schedule. He said the state doesn't "have operational control" over the Walgreens and CVS contracts for long-term care, but "We're gonna be working with these facilities to make sure the right thing happens next time," and if another nursing home can't be served in time, distribution should be limited to people who are most at risk.

"We have to understand that with an undertaking this massive, mistakes are going to happen," the governor said. "I don't think it was intentional, but it

Phase	Description
1 A	Long term care facilities, assisted living facilities, health care personnel
1 B	First responders, anyone >= 70, K-12 school personnel
1 C	Anyone >= 60, anyone older than 16 with CDC highest risk C19 risk conditions, all essential workers
2	Anyone >= 40
3	Anyone >= 16
4	Children under the age of 16 if the vaccine is approved for this age group (est. 18% of KY population)

Chart presented by Gov. Andy Beshear during press conference Monday.

should have been done differently." He said Walgreens will have to follow up with the lucky recipients to make sure they get their second dose.

Walgreens told Lexington's WKYT-TV that a nursing home needed fewer doses than it requested, and in such cases offers the vaccine to first responders and then Walgreens employees before offering it to the general public. Once thawed, the vaccine is supposed to be used within 12 hours.

Health and Family Services Secretary Eric Friedlander said about 3,000 residents and 2,500 employees in more than 30 Kentucky nursing homes had been vaccinated.

"This is a great start," he said. "We're making a down payment on the promises to take care of those who are most vulnerable first. We're learning as these roll out what the best way to proceed is."

Daily numbers: The state reported 1,455 new cases of the virus, lowering its seven-day rolling average to 2,040, the lowest since Nov. 10. Beshear said reporting was limited due to the holidays and perhaps by disruption of communications systems by the bombing in Nashville, but another leading indicator, the percentage of Kentuckians testing positive for the virus in the last seven days, again

fell below 8%, to 7.97%. "I believe now we've not only plateaued it," Beshear said, "we're starting to see cases decrease." He said his bans on in-person schooling and indoor food service, and other restrictions imposed in mid-November, "made a real difference" both in cases and demand on hospitals.

Kentucky hospitals reported 1,552 Covid-19 patients Monday, 411 of them in intensive care and 217 of those on ventilators. The first two figures were well below the average of the past week, and all were well below the records of 1,817, 460 and 254 that were reported on Dec. 16 or 17.

Why do they require two doses? and other questions

By BAPTIST HEALTH AND KENTUCKY HEALTH NEWS

The Covid-19 vaccines being distributed in the U.S. require two doses to achieve the effectiveness level of 95 percent recorded in clinical trials.

Multiple doses are standard for many vaccines. A vaccine works by exposing the body to a small part of the virus so that the immune system can learn to recognize it.

Think of the first dose as a "primer" to help your immune system create the antibodies that will fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Then, three or four weeks later, depending on which vaccine is used, a second dose "reminds" your immune system. By getting two doses, your immune system gets more opportunities to figure out how to counter a future infection.

The Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine went into use in the U.S. on Dec. 14. It requires two shots 21 days apart. The Moderna vaccine, which went into use the following week, requires two shots 28 days apart. Other vaccines in development would require only one dose, but are not likely to be approved anytime soon.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that health-care work-

ers and residents and employees of long-term care facilities be the first to receive vaccinations, and Kentucky is following those recommendations. CVS and Walgreens are handling long-term-care vaccinations.

The second phase of vaccinations in Kentucky, which is expected to begin in late January or early February, will include first responders, K-12 educators and members of the general public 70 and older.

Further phases depend on supplies. U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said he expects enough vaccine doses in the second quarter of 2021 for anyone who wants a vaccine.

Is the vaccine safe? Pfizer ran tests that included more than 44,000 people. The Food and Drug Administration's analysis of the vaccine's safety and effectiveness on people over the age of 16 has said that it found "no specific safety concerns" that would preclude the vaccine's use. The Moderna vaccine ran tests that included

30,000 people.

Are there any side effects? Yes. Based on what we know so far, many people will have a mild short-term immune response after getting a Covid-19 vaccine. These mean the vaccine is working and can include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Injection site swelling/redness/pain
- Chills
- Feeling unwell

Vaccine side effects may happen in 10 to 15 percent of people. For most people, these side effects are mild and go away in a couple of days. During early use in the United Kingdom, at least two people experienced an allergic reaction to the Pfizer vaccine.

Have more questions about Covid-19 vaccinations? If you'd like to learn more about Covid-19 vaccines or have questions about the vaccines currently available, visit the CDC website.



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