

March 8, 2021

### *A Message from the COVID Safety Team*

On Saturday March 6, the Bellingham Public Schools COVID-19 safety team partnered with Custom RX Shoppe to host a clinic where we vaccinated 500 staff and community partners. Today we are partnering with Hoagland's Pharmacy at Sehome High School to vaccinate another 300. Many other staff were vaccinated prior to these two events.

There are some common questions coming up that we would like to answer.

### What are the potential symptoms from the vaccine?

Symptoms, such as fever, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle aches, and body aches, can occur following COVID-19 vaccination. Preliminary data from mRNA COVID-19 vaccine trials indicate that most post-vaccination symptoms are mild to moderate in severity, occur within the first three days of vaccination (the day of vaccination and following two days, with most occurring the day after vaccination), resolve within 1-2 days of onset, and are more frequent and severe following the second dose and among younger persons compared to those who are older than 55 years of age.

Cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell are not consistent with post-vaccination symptoms, and instead may be symptoms of COVID-19 or another infection.

Staff who have the expected symptoms of fatigue, headache, chills, muscle aches, and body aches, but feel well enough and are willing to work may work provided they do not have a fever or symptoms that could be attributed to COVID like illness such as cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, loss of taste or smell.

If symptoms are not improving or last longer than two days, staff should contact their health care provider. They should be excluded from work and follow directions from their health care provider.

### Is it COVID-19 or a Vaccine Reaction?

<p><b>COVID-19 Symptoms</b> that DO NOT occur because of vaccination:</p> <p>Cough Shortness of breath Runny nose Sore throat Loss of taste or smell</p> <p>If you have the above symptoms and you think you may have COVID-19, seek medical advice. You may need testing for COVID-19.</p>	<p><b>Vaccine Reactions</b> that ARE similar to COVID-19 symptoms:</p> <p>Fever Fatigue Muscle aches Diarrhea Nausea Headache</p> <p>Vaccine reactions should go away in a day or two. If you feel very sick, consider seeking medical advice.</p>	<p><b>Vaccine Reactions</b> that DO NOT occur with COVID-19 illness:</p> <p>Soreness, redness, or swelling at injection site</p> <p>If one of these reactions prevents you from doing normal activities (tying shoes, typing, etc.), seek medical advice.</p>
---	--	---

The COVID-19 vaccine **does not** cause COVID-19 disease.

The COVID-19 vaccine **does not** cause a positive COVID-19 PCR test.

If you just tested positive for COVID-19, follow isolation guidance at: [COVIDvaccineWA.org](https://www.covidvaccineWA.org)

If I experience symptoms after receiving the COVID-19 vaccination that make it difficult to report to my work assignment, what type of leave may I use?

If you are unable to work due to COVID-19 vaccine symptoms, you may use paid leave such as sick leave, personal leave or vacation leave.

If I am vaccinated, do I have to follow the same sick protocol to get tested or stay home for 10 days if I am having symptoms?

Guidance from Washington Department of Health has not changed. If you are feeling sick, please stay home and get a test through one of the several [testing options in Whatcom County](#). We will inform you if local guidance changes.

You are not fully vaccinated until two weeks after you have received two doses of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or one dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Please read the [CDC's interim public health recommendations for fully vaccinated people](#).

If I am vaccinated, do I have to follow the same quarantine protocol if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19?

The CDC released [interim public health recommendations for fully vaccinated people](#) today, March 8. According to the CDC, if you are identified as a close contact, but are fully vaccinated and asymptomatic then you do not have to quarantine. You are not fully vaccinated until two weeks after you have received two doses of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or one dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine.

Guidance on close contacts if fully vaccinated has not changed from Washington Department of Health; we will update you when it does.

What is the guidance for fully vaccinated individuals?

**Regardless of vaccination status, our health and safety protocols are not changing in our schools or sites.** We will continue six feet of physical distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, staying home when ill and contact tracing every case.

According to the CDC, fully vaccinated people can:

- Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing.
- Visit with unvaccinated people from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing.
- Refrain from quarantine and testing following a known exposure if asymptomatic.

For now, fully vaccinated people should continue to:

- Take precautions in public like wearing a well-fitted mask and physical distancing.

- Wear masks, practice physical distancing and adhere to other prevention measures when visiting with unvaccinated people who are at [increased risk for severe COVID-19](#) disease or who have an unvaccinated household member who is at increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease.
- Wear masks, maintain physical distance and practice other prevention measures when visiting with unvaccinated people from multiple households.
- Avoid medium- and large-sized in-person gatherings.
- Get tested if experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- Follow guidance issued by individual employers.
- Follow CDC and health department travel requirements and recommendations.

## Additional COVID-19 Vaccine Resources

[Myths and Facts About COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

[Washington Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#)

[Washington Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs](#)

[CDC Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People](#)

If you have more questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, please email [BPS.Health@bellingshamschools.org](mailto:BPS.Health@bellingshamschools.org)