

Covid-19 Update
January 19 2021
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November was the deadliest month for Covid-19 since the pandemic began. More than a third of the deaths in Contra Costa County in 2020, occurred in December and three quarters of those deaths occurred in the last half of the month. January could see as many or more deaths from Covid-19. There are currently 268 Covid-19 patients hospitalized in the county, with a potential to exceed 300 next week.

The ICU capacity is around 3% at this time. This number has been fluctuating throughout the Bay Area. Today it is reported at 7.4%.

The Covid-19 has mutated. The new strain known as 452r is confirmed to be in the Bay Area and other parts of the state including the south and far north.

That's why with all of the efforts to get vaccine out to the most vulnerable, especially our long-term care facility residents and elderly, there has been new news that there are virus mutations circulating in California. This mutation in particular has been connected with several outbreaks. There is concern that this variant is more contagious but that is not yet confirmed. Research is being undertaken.

The appearance of a new variant serves to highlight the immense importance of wearing masks and social distancing until we have widespread availability and acceptance of a vaccine. The researchers are still studying to see if there is impact this variance or other variance have on the effectiveness of the vaccine.

Based on what is known about coronavirus and how the current Covid-19 vaccines work, experts say it would take dozens of mutations over multiple years for the virus to evolve enough for the vaccine to lose its effectiveness.

These viruses are very different from the flu which mutates more rapidly. That's why our flu vaccine has to change every year. It's not expected that the vaccine would lose its effectiveness in such a short period of time. We have full confidence in the vaccine at this time

It's more of a concern about whether the mutations affect the ability of the virus to spread.

There was another news item in the last 24 hours that there was a community vaccination clinic in another part of the state where ten people experienced an immediate allergic reaction. All part of the same lot as the Moderna vaccine. The state is starting the investigation to figure out what may have occurred. Nationwide, 1.3 million doses of the lot of Moderna vaccine distributed across the country. There have been so far no other reports of other reactions to the Moderna vaccine and to this lot of vaccine.

Contra Costa received 3700 doses of this lot. Contra Costa County Health Services has not administered any of this batch; one of our community partners did received approximately 600 doses, of which 320 doses were administered before the recall was announced.

They did not observe any reactions, any allergic reactions or unexpected reactions to any of the 320 individuals who got the vaccines. They pulled their remaining doses from the supply.

Allergic reactions can happen after both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Overall, data nationwide shows that about 1 in 100,000 people might get an allergic reaction. They tend to happen in the first 10 to 15 minutes of someone getting the vaccine, so the standard protocol is to observe someone 15 minutes after they get the vaccine. If someone has a history of severe reactions, they are advised to wait 30 minutes. This lot was pulled because there were ten reactions, more than is expected.

Contra Costa County remains under the regional stay at home order. It will be lifted when the state models project capacity is improving above 14% four weeks from now or when they do the projection.

January 12th, the Sacramento region had their stay at home order restrictions. The state runs the model several times a week and will announce when the model has the bay area above 15%. We are running between 3 and 7% ICU capacity in the bay area currently.

We know most experts say to get to community level immunity where we keep the virus under control by vaccine alone, we have to vaccinate 70 to 80% of the population. One more reason we want to get vaccine out and especially vaccine out to the most vulnerable individuals.

A lot of experts say that if we got to 10% of the population vaccinated and protected and if we focused on the right 10%, those most vulnerable, those most at high risk of being hospitalized or dying from covid-19, that could mean a big break for the hospitals declining admissions, declining deaths.

It could lead to more rapidly lifting the stay at home order and eventually moving down to the color-coded state tiers to open businesses and outdoor restaurants and personal care services and other things. We have to do our social distancing and mask wearing. We would be moving back toward opening up society and businesses a lot quicker once we get to the 10% or so threshold. We are closing in at 4 to 5% of the population already.

Tonight, the beacon will be lit in honor of all of the people that lost their lives to Covid-19. That will be 5:30 p.m. today staying lit until 7:30 p.m. tomorrow, in coordination with the Washington Monument also lit up in memory of the Covid victims.