

Public Health Madison & Dane County: Public must remain vigilant even with vaccinations underway, local health organizations encourage continued public health measures

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While the first COVID-19 vaccine has arrived in the Madison area, we are still months away from this or other vaccines being widely available in the community. Healthcare organizations in Dane County are reminding the public that preventive measures such as physical distancing and mask wearing remain crucial.

With the news this week that healthcare systems in the United States and Wisconsin have begun administering the Pfizer vaccine to frontline healthcare workers and employees who care for and treat COVID-19-positive patients, there is understandable excitement.

While there is a renewed feeling of hope, public health protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19 remain as important as ever. In fact, for the foreseeable future, those vaccinated frontline workers still have to wear proper PPE, even after they receive the required second dose of the vaccine.

The vaccine will not be a magic formula to eliminate COVID-19 from our lives completely, and is not likely to be broadly available for months. Therefore, it is imperative that the public continue to follow safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus and avoid further strain on local hospitals, especially as the holiday season approaches and beyond. These measures will be necessary even once the vaccine becomes widely available. The combination of widely administered

vaccinations, vaccine and prevention measures will help us in our eventual return to normal.

These preventive measures include:

- Don't gather with people outside your own household and if you must, wear a mask, stay at least six feet apart, and follow [public health orders](#) on gathering limits.
- Wear a mask when in public, even in outdoor locations.
- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, scrubbing thoroughly and rinsing completely.
- Stay home if you have symptoms and get tested.

These Dane County healthcare organizations support this urgent public health message:

- Access Community Health Centers
- Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin
- Public Health Madison & Dane County
- SSM Health
- Stoughton Health
- UnityPoint Health – Meriter
- UW Health
- University Health Services, University of Wisconsin–Madison

For more on the vaccines and answers to frequently asked questions, please visit:
[Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#)
[Centers for Disease Control](#)