

CEDAR SPRINGS COMMUNITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Questions and Answers for our Members

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Dear Springers!

Our lives in the coming months will not resemble the lives we took for granted only a short while ago. Why?

New COVID-19 outbreaks will have to be detected and contained by our governments and public health services as restrictions are slowly lifted. A future SARS-CoV-2 vaccine is often mentioned as the only effective tool to end this pandemic.

Question: Is it likely that a safe and effective vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 will be developed and when might such a vaccine be available?

A few facts:

- Vaccines help our immune systems to recognize and fight viruses and bacteria.
- Vaccines protect us against debilitating and life-threatening diseases such as tetanus, diphtheria, polio, measles and influenza.
- Vaccines for influenza need to be re-engineered every year on the best guesses of emerging strains. It is unknown whether this might be needed for COVID-19.
- Vaccine development does not always progress smoothly: For example, despite more than 30 years of research, there is no effective vaccine against HIV/AIDS.

Answer:

- The current race to develop coronavirus vaccines is unprecedented: Close to 100 different teams are working around the globe on at least 8 types of different vaccines. Almost daily, new research teams join this world-wide effort.
- Because of this intensity of the research effort, it is likely but not guaranteed that one or more safe and effective vaccines will be found.
- Realistic and ethical scientists hope to have a vaccine ready for clinical use in 12 to 18 months.
- A vaccine that has been shown in large and well-conducted clinical trials to be ready for use is just the first step: World-wide access to such a vaccine is the next hurdle. Huge numbers of doses must be available and affordable everywhere and ideally produced locally.
- Even in Canada, access could initially pose a problem: *“The federal government is investing in plants across the country because if a COVID-19 vaccine was available tomorrow, Canada wouldn’t have the capacity to quickly produce the millions of doses required.”* (National Post, May 13, 2020)

- Vaccines will only end this pandemic if a great majority of citizens accept them.

“Millions of lives and trillions of dollars in economic activity may depend not just on producing a vaccine, but on persuading people to accept it”.

(New York Times, May 13, 2020)

- It may be politically difficult in some jurisdictions to make a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine mandatory. However, restrictions on international travel are likely for those who are not vaccinated or have not otherwise proven to be immune. There is a precedent for such restrictions: a number of countries currently require proof of yellow fever vaccination from international travelers.

Further Reading:

1. Vaccines

<https://www.who.int/topics/vaccines/en/>

2. The race for coronavirus vaccines: a graphical guide

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01221-y>

3. Get ready for a vaccine information war

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/13/technology/coronavirus-vaccine-disinformation.html>

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