



Hamilton Fire Department
Pensioners Association
NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2021

OMERS

When you visit the OMERS website at www.OMERS.com you may notice some changes. We recently refreshed the website to improve the back end of our system and the ability of all website audiences to navigate the content.

In keeping with this approach, we have integrated the Sponsors Corporation website into the broader OMERS website, aligning information by topic. New pages have been developed, including a new section called The Plan that provides both basic information and explores the broad value of the Plan. We took the opportunity to modernize the look and feel, providing a more professional look with colour, typography, and photography. We have also begun to replace the text-heavy experience with more dynamic content. As with any website, we will continue to grow and evolve.

We encourage you to visit us at www.OMERS.com to find out more about OMERS and we are always interested in your feedback on the website and other matters.

Occupational Health and Exposure Program (OHEP)

From Alison Moore: The 2020/2021 program will end at the end of March 2021.

Labs will startup again the first week of August. Medicals start the first week of October. Fingers crossed that it will be in-person!

From Doctor Mike Pysklywec:

We've been under the shadow of this pandemic for the last year and I'm sure we all feel the same fatigue about how we've been living. Frankly, vaccination will be the way out of this pandemic. I would really encourage you to take any opportunity to get immunized. It is a safe, effective vaccination; I was lucky enough to get my first shot recently. Understandably, there are many good questions out there about the vaccination. I've tried to answer some questions below.

How does the vaccine work?

The Pfizer and Moderna immunizations are mRNA vaccines mRNA signals your body to produce a protein that mimics the coronavirus spike protein. Your body then sees this protein then develops antibodies and other immune responses that will then fight coronavirus. The AstraZeneca vaccine is an adenovirus. It uses the shell of a different virus (adenovirus) to shuttle genetic material to signal production of the spike protein.

Basically you are fooling your body into thinking it has had coronavirus so that it will develop immunity. The vaccines don't damage your DNA. They don't give you COVID; they are not a weakened virus.

Is the vaccine effective?

The Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines appear to be very effective at preventing you from getting sick from COVID. While there are some differences in preventing symptomatic disease, they all seem particularly effective at preventing severe COVID. It is not completely clear if the vaccines prevent transmission of coronavirus. This means that if you have the vaccine, you likely won't get sick, but you could still carry the infection and pass it on to others. However there is building evidence that the vaccines also seem to be effective at preventing transmission of coronavirus.

Is the vaccine safe?

The approved vaccines appear to be very safe. They can cause 1 to 2 day reactions of fatigue, muscle ache, arm pain and other effects related to the temporary stimulation of your immune system. This reactogenicity is particularly common after the second vaccine dose. Approximately 1 in 100 000 will suffer from anaphylaxis to the vaccine. No serious or long term effects have been seen. Although the vaccines have been available for only a short time, long term effects would not be expected as the immunization is simply activating your own immune system to produce antibodies. These vaccines have been given to 100's of millions of people so far with no new reportings of adverse effects.

Why is the vaccine important?

The pandemic will come to an end if we can get enough people vaccinated. The pandemic won't disappear with natural herd immunity or on it's own. If too few people get the vaccine, the virus will continue to circulate in the many people who are unimmunized. The vaccine will provide us with a herd immunity so that we can get back to a safe, normal life as quickly as possible. We are fortunate that such safe and effective vaccines were developed that will get us out of this.

Were the vaccines developed too quickly?

No, they were developed in time Never before have so many resources and money gone into vaccine development. This focused effort allowed for rapid development of vaccines. It typically requires longer time to study vaccines, but the trials on COVID were done during a pandemic when there were lots of cases. With all these cases, we were quickly able to get the answer that the vaccines are safe and effective. The major remaining question is how long immunity will last. We might need booster doses in the future, but that won't be answered for months to years.

Should I get the vaccine?

I would strongly encourage everyone that is able to get the vaccine. This will protect you, your family and friends, and your community and will help end the pandemic.

Who shouldn't get the vaccine?



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If you have a severe allergy to constituents of the vaccine, you should not get the vaccine. There are no known medical conditions that should stop you from vaccination. For most underlying medical conditions, you are better off having protection from COVID than avoiding the vaccine. If you have questions or concerns about specific conditions, you should ask your doctor. Prior allergy or anaphylaxis to foods/venom/environmental triggers would not preclude you from having the vaccine, but you should mention this before receiving the shot.