

Dear Resident/Family Members,

By now you have probably learned that COVID-19 vaccines have been approved for emergency use and ready for distribution to the healthcare workers and residents in long term care. We have long awaited this exciting news.

We understand that some of you may be concerned about the safety of these new vaccines, as they have been developed and tested far more quickly than those in the past. We want to assure you that the speed with which these vaccines were developed is not due to skipping important safety steps, but rather the result of focused, collaborative work performed by experts across the globe. Vaccines approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration have undergone the same level of rigorous testing for safety and efficacy as other vaccines, and have been tested in tens of thousands of people, including older adults. Two independent advisory committees of experts from academic institutions also monitor vaccines to ensure their safety.

Most of the COVID-19 vaccines require two separate doses given about three or four weeks apart, depending on the vaccine. Participants of clinical trials have reported experiencing short-term side effects after being vaccinated, with more pronounced discomfort after the second dose. These possible side effects include headache, muscle pains, fatigue, chills, fever and pain at the injection site. Sometimes there is misunderstanding about the cause of these reactions, as you may have heard someone say a vaccine has “made them sick” or given them the disease that the vaccine was intended to prevent. We want to be clear that this is not the case. The COVID-19 vaccine cannot give you a COVID-19 infection. The vaccine works by helping the body create antibodies to fight off the virus. Feeling discomfort after getting the vaccine means that the vaccine is doing its job and your body is making antibodies.

We, along with thousands of other long term care facilities, are participating in a program with the Centers for Disease Control to help us most efficiently distribute these vaccines to our residents free of charge once they are available. We will keep you informed of this process as we move forward. Our staff will also have the opportunity to get vaccinated through this program, if they have not been vaccinated previously.

I encourage you to reach out to us if you have any questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, its possible side effects, and what to expect after you or a loved one receives it. As we have been saying over the course of this difficult year, we are all in this together. Please know that the safety and wellbeing of our staff and residents have been and remain our top priority. We are confident that the worldwide, unprecedented scientific achievement of these COVID-19 vaccines will eventually enable to us enjoy life with our loved ones again. We look forward to doing our part in this effort by getting the COVID-19 vaccine, and hope you will join us.

Sincerely,

Michael Bither MD CMD Medical Director.