



Contributed photo
Dr. Zach Bailey receives his COVID-19 vaccination last month at Blue Mountain Hospital from nurse Jenelle Moulton.

COVID-19

WHEN TO GET VACCINATED

Len's Pharmacy recommends that everyone gets the vaccine at the earliest opportunity

By Greg Armstrong
 For the Blue Mountain Eagle

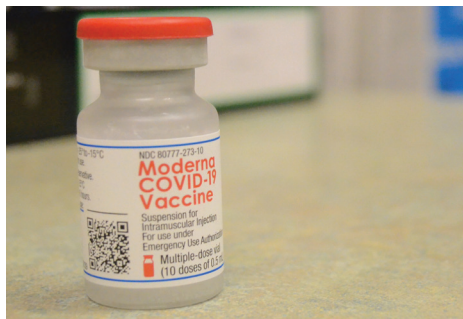
Here at Len's Pharmacy, we have had a wild ride in 2020, and it looks like 2021 (part II) is lining up for more adventure! One thing we have learned over the last year is that life is full of choices, and each one of us needs to make the choices we feel are best for our situation.

A major choice coming up this year for most of us is when do we get vaccinated for COVID-19? Let's take a look at a few of the factors that will go into making this decision.

Some initial questions that will help us make the decision are:

- Would we like to see the COVID-19 pandemic end?
- Has anyone I know been personally affected by COVID-19?
- Have previous vaccination programs been successful in ending pandemics or outbreaks of diseases?
- Does the potential benefit of the vaccine outweigh the potential risks of the vaccine?

Obviously, these are not the only questions, but they provide a good start for gauging our decision to receive the vaccine.



Eagle file photo
A vial of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine sits on a counter at the Grant County Health Department.

Now let's take a look at why this vaccine is not as easy to distribute and administer as the annual influenza vaccine. Currently, there are two COVID-19 vaccines approved for administration in the United States, Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna. The storage requirements of these vaccines are very stringent and must be followed to ensure the vaccine's viability. Pfizer BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine needs to be stored, which includes transportation, at negative 112 to negative 76 degrees Fahrenheit (-112°F and -76°F). That

is cold — colder than Seneca's 1933 Oregon State record low of -54°F. Our standard home freezers are normally set at 0°F. Special Sub-Zero Freezers are needed to store and maintain the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine requires a storage and transportation temperature of between negative 13 and 5 degrees Fahrenheit (-13°F to 5°F). More than likely, Grant County will see the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

Even after it is in the local freezer, there are more restrictions that limit how freely it is thawed and how long it can be at this higher temperature. Each vial of the vaccine contains an official 10 doses and, once punctured for the first vaccine administration, must be discarded after six hours. The logistical ramifications of this is that all 10 doses must be given in a short window. This prevents "drop-in" vaccinations, as we are able to do for the annual influenza vaccine and many others. There must be a schedule for those 10 vaccine doses prior to beginning the first vaccination. What this means is that you must watch for group vaccination opportunities.

See Vaccine, Page 9