



**NEVADA  
HEALTH  
RESPONSE**

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**COVID-19 Press Bulletin for 3-12-2021**

Carson City, NV — Today, Caleb Cage, Nevada COVID-19 Response Director was joined by Mark Riddle, M.D., Dr.P.H., associate dean of clinical research and professor at University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine's Department of Internal Medicine and Medical Research to give members of the media an update on COVID-19 response efforts and more information on the Janssen vaccine.

This bulletin provides informational items from the call. As a reminder, data is provided in a dashboard on the home page of the [Nevada Health Response](#) website and can be accessed 24 hours a day.

**SUMMARY:**

- Director Cage thanked all the media members for helping get the message out to Nevadans that are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine after Wednesday's call.
- Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD) was able to open eligibility to food service and hospitality workers yesterday. At this time, this only applied to Southern Nevada Health District.
- In addition to this workforce group, the State is also working to increase eligibility to those 55 and older with underlying health conditions through our pharmacy partners **statewide** by the end of next week.

- During the call, Director Cage clarified information about the increase in reported cases in the last two days.
- The Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Analytics has looked at the data and attributed the high numbers of cases, to a backlog in electronic laboratory reports. This was communicated by both SNHD and Carson City Health and Human Services.
- As has been the case, the “trends tab” of the dashboard reports back to the day the specimens were collected. When reviewing this section, the State is still seeing a declining trend, which means that the cases that came in today were attributed back over a period of time and are not indicative of not account for any kind of spike or increase.
- **This is why the State continues to review trends over time, as opposed to daily fluctuations in numbers.**
- Director Cage spoke to recent articles concerning some of our rural counties in Nevada, particularly Esmeralda County. From the beginning, the State focused on access and equity – equity includes geographical equity, too.
- The State team has been in constant contact with counties, long before vaccines were available, about how to handle challenges such as distribution, storage, and handling for these vaccines.
- The Emergency Manager for Esmeralda County participates on these calls with us. We’ve been able to work both with Nye County and Esmeralda County to support these two counties. The State has offered to send a mobile pod out to some of these remote areas, in

coordination with county officials.

- The State will continue to work with all counties across the State to support access and equity to this vaccine. As the Janssen – or Johnson & Johnson – vaccine becomes more available, the State will continue to support these efforts through whatever resources are available.
- At the same time, work is being done on the vaccine dashboard, as that's been brought up as a challenge. Anytime the State sees a challenge, officials work together to solve it. More updates will be provided as changes are made.
- Governor Sisolak received his COVID-19 vaccine yesterday. Director Cage also received his COVID-19 vaccine earlier this week. Director Cage received his vaccine in Carson City also got the Janssen product, as it was the vaccine available at the time at that specific location.
- Director Cage expressed sincere appreciation for the work being done by the Carson City Health and Human Services in collaboration with the Nevada National Guard and FEMA partners.
- Dr. Riddle spoke of initial observations from the perspective of a vaccinologist (an expert who studies vaccines) and public health physician.
- Dr. Riddle described the similarity and differences between Janssen, Moderna, and Pfizer vaccines, creating an analogy between a lock and key.
- The mRNA vaccines (Moderna and Pfizer) make that same 'key' protein, but they use our own bodies by packaging the instructions to make the 'key' into the vaccine, injecting that into the muscle, and

letting our own bodies make that protein. The mRNA (the instruction) is very unstable so that's why it needs to be kept so cold.

- The Janssen vaccine works a little different—it uses a weakened virus called an Adenovirus—which is essentially a very common virus that causes mild colds to provide the instructions for making the 'key' or the spike protein. They've modified this virus so that it can't replicate and inserted the gene that makes the key (spike protein) so that when it's injected and your cells take it up, your own cells again produce the spike protein which your body then sees as foreign and creates antibodies and other immune responses.
- The adenovirus is a much more stable form of the genetic instructions to make the protein so it can be kept at refrigeration. And it's also thought that since it mimics a more natural viral infection, that the immune response is better and thus requires only a single dose.
- In terms of the safety of these vaccines, they have all gone through the same extremely rigorous process that all vaccines go through to evaluate safety by the Food and Drug Administration. And they are all safe.
- All of the current vaccines are safe vaccines
- From an effectiveness perspective, there were some differences observed for the Janssen vaccine in the phase III trial, but there is also very good news.

- It is important to point out that it's actually difficult to compare the efficacy of vaccines such as these during pandemic times.
- The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were tested largely during a time of lower disease rates as well as prior to the wide-spread observation of vaccine variants. Differences in time could have impacts on differences in observed effectiveness.
- For example, if there is more virus circulating and more people getting infected (e.g. force of infection) it may be harder for a vaccine to induce an immune response against multiple assaults. Dr. Riddle compared it to "a shield you protecting you from a volley of arrows against a small army versus a large army."
- Any one of these vaccines will keep you from severe disease and death due to COVID-19
- There will not be a call with the media on Wednesday, March 17. There will be three COVID-19 Task Force meetings, March 16 through March 18. The agendas for the task force meetings can be found on [NVHealthResponse.nv.gov](https://www.nvhealthresponse.nv.gov).

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