

State set to enter next COVID-19

Tentative dates, eligibility for next phases also announced

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — South Carolina is poised to enter its next COVID-19 vaccination stage beginning next week. On Monday, anyone

aged 55 and up can begin scheduling vaccine appointments in the state. Other front-line workers are also included in this phase, meaning school staff, daycare workers, manufacturing workers and grocery store

workers can sign up for appointments. The group includes about 2.7 million South Carolinians. "South Carolina remains focused on protecting the lives and health of South Carolinians from COVID-19," S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control director Edward Simmer said in a news release. "With the significant increase in vaccine supply and

progress in vaccinating people in group 1a, front-line health care workers and those aged 65 and over, we are now ready to move to our next phase. Our state's vaccine plan prioritizes those with greatest risk, while ensuring equal access to the vaccine for every South Carolinian aged 16 and over." Those with increased

SEE VAX, PAGE A3

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FROM PAGE A1

risk for severe COVID-19 disease — including chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease, diabetes and heart disease — from ages 16-64 are included in Phase 1b. Correctional and immigration detention facility inmates can also sign up for appointments.

Some 956,285 doses had been administered in South Carolina as of Tuesday, according to DHEC. Nearly 93 percent of the Pfizer-BioNTech doses have been used — 704,120 shots. About 50 percent of the Moderna vaccine doses have been used — 422,800 shots. There were approximately 520,592 outstanding appointments in the state on Tuesday.

"In the month of February, South Carolina made tremendous progress on expanding access to vaccinations as the supply of vaccine increased," Gov. Henry McMaster said. "Our hospitals, pharmacies and health care providers became more nimble and efficient at getting shots in arms. Because of these successes, we're now in a position to make the majority of South Carolinians eligible to receive the vaccine."

The release said public health officials estimate it will take 70-80 percent of the population to be vaccinated in order to achieve herd immunity.

Simmer also touched on the breakthrough in the emergency federal approval of a third vaccine created by Johnson & Johnson within the past few days. He said the approval has given "us renewed hope for a return to normalcy

and a light at the end of the tunnel."

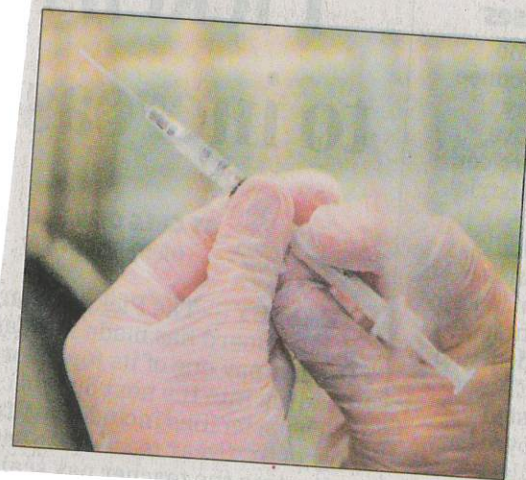
"At the same time, we know our fight is not yet over," Simmer said. "Until enough of us get vaccinated, we must all continue to wear masks, stay 6 feet away from others and avoid crowds, even after we have received the vaccine. In addition, being tested can help reduce the spread of the disease and identify the presence of variants as early as possible."

The state is set to get more than 40,000 doses of the newly approved vaccine this week, according to the Associated Press.

To schedule online appointments, visit scdhec.gov/vaxlocator or call DHEC's COVID-19 Vaccine Information Line at 1-866-365-8110.

OTHER DATES SET

Phase 1c is tentatively scheduled to begin April 12, and Phase 2 is tentatively scheduled for May 3. The former includes anyone age 45 and older and includes construction workers, delivery drivers, utility workers and others who do not have frequent, close and ongoing contact with others. The estimated



A pharmacist prepares to vaccinate a resident of Monarch Villa memory care facility with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine last month in Stockbridge, Ga. More South Carolina residents will be eligible to receive their vaccine beginning on Monday.

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population of Phase 1c in South Carolina is approximately 1.9 million. Phase 2 includes all South Carolinians ages 16 and up.

"We're asking South Carolinians to consider others, and the fact that this plan is risk-based to prevent severe illness and death," Simmer said. "You're urged to not jump the line and put your loved ones, friends or neighbors at risk by doing so."