



NPAIHB Vaccine Success Stories

With the hardship we have all experienced this last year, it is easy to overlook **what an amazing success the new COVID-19 vaccines are!**

All three vaccines, **Pfizer-BioNTech**, **Moderna**, and the one-dose **Johnson and Johnson**, offer excellent protection from severe illness and disease and have reported 100% effectiveness in preventing hospitalizations and deaths in their clinical trials.¹ And, now these results are being confirmed in real world settings.² These remarkable results make these vaccines similar to some of the best vaccines ever created, such as those for chickenpox, measles, and polio.

These vaccines are also very safe. Safety monitoring for them is the most comprehensive in U.S. history. Two systems monitor vaccine safety, the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#), and [v-safe](#), a system established by CDC specifically for COVID-19. In the first month of monitoring, no unexpected reactions or safety concerns have been identified.³

Thankfully, **we can vaccinate adults and elders with confidence**, knowing that getting vaccinated is the best way to protect our community and loved ones and to end the pandemic!

Tribes Recognized Nationally for Vaccine Rollout Success

Across the country, in media, online journals, and local and regional newspapers, including in the Pacific Northwest, Tribes are being hailed for their successful rollouts of the vaccines, with vaccination rates often much higher or even double State's rates.

Several reasons stand out for this success – including our focus on local surrounding communities, Tribal sovereignty, and creative communications. Sovereignty gives Tribes the flexibility to decide how best to vaccinate their communities, reducing vaccine waste and allowing for faster vaccinations. Multiple types of communications are being used to make sure communities are aware of the importance of being vaccinated and vaccination events. These include digital and social media but also “old school” methods like print media, phone trees, one-on-one conversations, radio messages, and flyers sent home to elders with food baskets.

Underlying it all, has been **our deep commitment to protect our communities** and strong leaders who advocate for the health and welfare of their Tribes.

Each person who gets vaccinated is doing their part to protect our community, too.

A new [survey](#) of American Indian and Alaska Native people by the Urban Indian Health Institute, found that among all surveyed, 75% were willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and 74% of those believed getting vaccinated is their responsibility to their community. As Derrick Belgarde, deputy director of the Chief Seattle Club, said in one article, **“We don't take the vaccine for ourselves. We take it for our community.”**⁴

¹ <https://www.livescience.com/covid-19-vaccine-efficacy-explained.html>

² <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2101765>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7008e3.htm>

⁴ <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/we-take-it-for-our-community>

Next Steps

New guidance from the CDC allows **some flexibility to people who are fully vaccinated!** Fully vaccinated means two weeks after your second dose of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines or two weeks after your one-dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine.

Now fully vaccinated people can:

- Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing.
- Visit with unvaccinated people indoors from ONE household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease without wearing masks or physical distancing.
- Avoid quarantine and testing following exposure to COVID-19 if without symptoms.⁵

Keep Up the Precautions

The new vaccines will protect us from severe disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 and will help end the pandemic, **but there are still some unknowns.**

It is unknown if vaccinated people can carry the virus without showing symptoms and accidentally spread it to others who are unvaccinated.⁶ There are also new variants of the virus and it is unknown how much, or if, vaccinated people are susceptible to them. Researchers are working hard to answer these questions, but it may take a few more months.

Until then, there are **some important things we can all do** to help keep our families and community safe until we return to normal.

- **Get vaccinated and encourage others to get vaccinated.** Reaching “community immunity” is necessary to end the pandemic. Researchers believe that 85% or more of the population needs to be vaccinated to reach this goal.⁷
- Continue to **practice masking and social distancing outside your** home; avoid crowded indoor settings; and wash your hands regularly. Native people have the highest rate of death from COVID-19 in the country.⁸ These small things can continue to protect our communities until we are all safe.
- If you, or others you know, are feeling sick, **make sure to be tested for COVID-19.** Testing is still very important to control the spread of this virus.



“We look to take care of people. Generosity is a very important attribute in terms of who we are as a traditional people. That’s how we measured wealth.”

-Donny Stevenson, vice chairman of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe.⁹

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

⁶ <https://www.statnews.com/2021/02/02>

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/24/health/herd-immunity-covid-coronavirus.html>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/feb/04/native-americans-coronavirus-covid-death-rate>

⁹ <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/we-take-it-for-our-community>