



December 12, 2020

We ask that you consider vaccination against COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to gain momentum across the nation and in King County. COVID-19 is directly responsible for nearly 300,000 deaths across the US, 3000 deaths in Washington State, and 1000 deaths in King County. Moreover, COVID-19 is associated with countless other deaths as persons delay or forgo care for other serious non-COVID conditions, many which could be successfully treated through activation of the emergency response system. This pandemic is the single largest health tragedy of modern-day US experience. Yet, the best estimates indicate only about 10% of Americans have been infected to date.

King County has been an important example of community cooperation to protect and preserve public health. The death rate here is substantially lower than most comparable metropolitan regions, a tribute to the coordinated and common-sense persistence of the public, the first responders, the staff in clinics and hospitals, and those leading the public health system. Although we are not perfect, we have admirably worn masks, washed our hands, and watched our distance. Your actions have set an example for our community, many of whom pay close attention to the civic leadership that is EMS and the Fire Service.

Now we have another opportunity to protect and preserve the public's health, and in turn guide our region out of this very challenging circumstance. As students of history will attest, terrible circumstances often accelerate treatments for human health. This pandemic is no different. Medical science, the pharmaceutical industry, and public health have worked together to develop safe and effective vaccines. These vaccines offer the opening to transform the suffering and death of the COVID-19 pandemic to restore community health and return us all to a healthier, safer new normal life.

The science of vaccination involves both individual and community immunity. Vaccination protects the individual, while also preventing the spread of infection throughout the community. This community-wide benefit of vaccination increases as we achieve higher rates of immunity that enable the interruption of the transmission chain. Thus, vaccination against COVID-19 is not just about your health but is also a commitment to the health of those around us. Vaccination to prevent spread of COVID-19 is an important responsibility for those of us involved in healthcare as we care for the most medically vulnerable people.

We would ask that you please reflect on the balance of benefit versus risk as you consider the COVID vaccination. The attached document provides information related to the COVID vaccines and is informed by the results of the vaccine trials with expert review and interpretation by our regional public health leaders and infectious disease specialists. As the physician leadership of our world-class EMS system, we appreciate our important responsibility to the welfare of the EMS professionals who serve our King County communities. It is with this understanding that we strongly recommend that each eligible EMS provider in King County receive vaccination against COVID-19. Your actions will positively impact personal and community health. You will again set the example for best practices for our region. Other public safety organizations across the United States will follow your lead.

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