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| **Press Release**  **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Tim Jones | tim.jones@heartoftexashealthcare.org  325-597-2901 |

**COVID-19 Vaccine is Key to Ending the Deadly Pandemic**

*Local healthcare system explains the facts about the life-saving vaccine.*

BRADY, Texas (January 22, 2021) – As COVID-19 vaccinations get underway in Brady, having the facts about this life-saving immunization is key to ensuring you and your loved ones are protected. According to Heart of Texas Healthcare System, the vaccine is safe and effective at preventing potentially life-threatening illness from COVID-19

“Although the vaccine is only available in limited quantities at the moment, having it available in the local community is a huge step toward putting an end to this pandemic”, said Tim Jones, CEO of Heart of Texas Healthcare System. “The vaccine has been shown to be safe, and it is our priority to ensure that those in our community who are eligible are able to receive it.”

According to Jones, the vaccine has undergone an extensive approval process, which includes laboratory testing and clinical trials to prove that it is effective at preventing illness and safe to administer. Companies began making a vaccine early during the pandemic, and because they used previously proven methods of development, they were able to quickly produce safe and effective vaccines.

At this time, only certain groups will be eligible to receive the initial doses, since supplies are limited. At this time, those eligible include adults over 65, and individuals with certain underlying health conditions. Those include individuals over 16 with conditions such as chronic kidney disease, cancer, COPD, certain heart conditions, diabetes, obesity with a BMI greater than 30 percent and pregnant women.

The vaccine will also be available for healthcare workers in corrections and detention facilities, embalmers and funeral home workers who have direct contact with decedents, medical examiners and other medical certifiers who have direct contact with decedents and school nurses who provide health care to students and teachers.

The next phase will include certain front-line workers, such as teachers and school staff, social services workers, workers who maintain critical infrastructure and others who are unable to work remotely.

Those who have recovered from COVID-19 may still benefit from receiving the vaccine. Re-infection is possible, and it is believed that immunity from infection may not last in the long term. The COVID-19 vaccines have been designed to create an optimal immune response.

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A second dose of the vaccine is typically given three to four weeks after the first dose to help the body develop a stronger immune response to infection and reduce the chance of becoming ill if infected.

Like many vaccines, including the flu shot, a very small number of people have experienced allergic reactions. Unlike some vaccines, eggs were not used in the development of the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines. However, those who have experienced allergic reactions to vaccines or have any known serious allergies should consult with their providers.

Mild side effects may include a sore arm where the vaccine was administered and cold-like symptoms such as headache or mild fever that typically resolve within a day or two as your body builds antibodies to fight infection.

According to Jones, it may still be possible for people who are vaccinated to spread COVID-19 to others if they are infected with the virus, even if they experience no symptoms. Until everyone is vaccinated, everyone must continue taking steps to slow the spread of the virus.

“As more doses become available, we will be able to offer the vaccine to more people in our community,” Jones said. “Knowing the facts and ensuring that you get vaccinated when you are eligible could be a lifesaver.”

The COVID-19 vaccine is currently available to those who meet certain criteria. To find out if you are eligible, please call Heart of Texas Healthcare System at 325-597-2901

Visit [www.heartoftexashealthcare.org](http://www.heartoftexashealthcare.org) to learn more about local healthcare services.

**About Heart of Texas Healthcare System**Heart of Texas Healthcare System provides healthcare for residents of McCulloch County and the surrounding area. Founded in 2011, the system offers a wealth of medical services, including 24-hour emergency care, advanced radiology services, a clinical laboratory, physical therapy, surgical services, patient education, sleep studies, and more. The system also owns and operates Brady Medical Clinic, which provides family medicine, preventive care, and acute care for minor emergencies. For additional information, please visit www.heartoftexashealthcare.org.

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