

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information,  
contact: Frances Graves  
District Director and Community Vitality Agent, Wildcat Extension District  
francesgraves.ksu.edu, (620)784-5337

## **What Research Tells Us About the COVID-19 Vaccine and Kansans**

It's hard to imagine a time when COVID-19 didn't exist – when “virus” could mean anything and only medical professionals wore masks. The entire world has had to learn a lot very quickly in the past year. In uncertain times like these, science and facts can alleviate fear and help us understand what's happening and how best to move forward.

Nearly everyone knows someone who has died of COVID-19, but why does this disease affect people so differently? Researchers are investigating immune responses of COVID patients and blood samples, and while there are still no complete answers, this research has developed several treatments that are reducing the severity of symptoms for many.

How have we managed to create vaccines against COVID-19 in such a short window of time? Dr. Andrew Monte, a physician and researcher at the University of Colorado put it best: “The pandemic has brought scientists together to solve a single problem like no other instance in our history.”

Vaccines often take years to develop, but modern technology and the scale of this pandemic led scientists to share information in real time across the globe. Governments removed financial risks for vaccine companies, allowing simultaneous rather than consecutive steps, expediting the process while still providing robust and large clinical trials according to the Centers for Disease Control. The CDC has reported that COVID-19 vaccine trials went beyond most vaccine trial requirements by including people of all races and ethnicities, genders, and age groups, specifically including elders as well as people with co-morbidities like diabetes and high blood pressure.

If vaccines are safe, is there research to explain why Kansans may hesitate to get the shot? A January 2021 analysis by the Kansas Health Institute (KHI) found 46.5 percent of Kansans were somewhat hesitant – reporting that they planned to wait and see if it’s safe, were concerned about possible side effects and/or believed others needed the vaccine more. That last barrier has now been removed – the KDHE announced that all Kansans age 16+ are eligible to get the free COVID-19 vaccine and most county health departments report adequate supplies for all.

If science tells us vaccines are safe, why did Kansans express fear in the KHI Vaccine hesitancy study? Ann Bostrom, an expert on risk perception at the University of Washington, said many people are judging the situation incorrectly – recalling random headlines shared on social media rather than considering the hundreds of thousands who have died because they were not vaccinated against COVID-19.

K-State Research and Extension is a statewide network of educators sharing unbiased, research-based information and expertise on issues important to Kansas. It has established local, state, regional, national, and international partnerships. For more information on local research and extension programs and activities, visit [www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu](http://www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu).

For more information, contact Frances Graves, District Director and Community Vitality Agent, (620)784-5337 or francesgraves@ksu.edu.

###

*K - State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer*