COVID-19 UPDATE 4/15/21
GRR FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Gallatin City County Health Department website provides the most authoritative local information about COVID-19, https://www.healthygallatin.org/. For additional information and updates, go to: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.

The most important recent news is the availability of highly effective vaccines against the COVID-19 virus. The development of these vaccines has been much faster than previous vaccines for a number of reasons that include: the culmination of decades of scientific research, the high prevalence of the disease, and the international political and financial willingness to fund vaccine development and fund vaccine manufacturers' investment in studies and vaccine production.

The first vaccines are now available in the US and their details are well publicized and documented. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are both 95% effective in large clinical trials. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine is a single-dose vaccine that is also very effective. Several other vaccines are "in the pipeline" but the ready availability of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines make most of these newer products less likely to have a significant impact on the US market.

Vaccine appointments are becoming easy to get, finally. Everyone 12 years of age and older is now eligible for vaccination with Pfizer and strongly encouraged to get a vaccination. Vaccinations are available through Bozeman Health and other primary care medical facilities and retail pharmacies. The Public Health Department is sponsoring "pop-up" vaccination clinics throughout the county through Best Practice Medicine.

There is no reason to think this virus will simply disappear, and we may have to deal with it for a long time. Unfortunately, those who decline vaccination will be an at-risk group where COVID will probably continue to multiply and sustain the pandemic. That is nothing to be happy about, but it is reality. Inevitable mutation of the virus has already led to variants that are less susceptible to the antibodies created with natural infection and some vaccines.

Issues that cannot be determined at this time include:
1. Will vaccine boosters be necessary?
2. Will vaccine adjustments be necessary to protect against emerging or future variants?

Vaccine Cards and Documentation

Everyone vaccinated receives a CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card. This card includes your name and date of birth and documents your vaccinations. This card is not a "vaccination passport". It simply documents your vaccination. We recommend you do the following with your card:
1. Take a photograph or scan of the card and save it on your phone or computer, or
2. Make photocopies of the card

3. If you received your vaccination at a location other than your healthcare provider's office: send a copy, scan, or photograph to your healthcare provider's office so it can be entered in your healthcare record. That way, if you lose your card, your healthcare provider will have a record of your vaccination status.
4. Keep the card in a safe location where you won't lose it. We recommend you keep it with your passport (if you have one), or where you keep your social security card or your vehicle title documents.
5. Don't laminate the card; it has spots to document booster shots if they become necessary. If you want to carry a laminated version, make a copy and laminate it.

Documentation of vaccination into the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Immunization Information System, imMTrax, is automatic at most healthcare offices. If you get vaccinated through the County Health Department you have to give specific permission for them to share your data with that system. We strongly recommend you give your vaccination provider permission to enter your vaccination documentation into that system. In case you lose your card, that system will contain the documentation you might need in the future to prove your vaccination.

What does GRR Fire Recommend?

Get vaccinated!
1. The effectiveness of vaccines is an unequivocal proven fact.
2. Vaccine safety is very good, where the benefits outweigh the small risks of complications.
3. Vaccines protect the person receiving them and others through suppression of disease spread.

Practice good hand hygiene:
1. Vigorous hand washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water after contact with surfaces you don't control, such as at stores or other public places.
2. Wash them immediately when you get home after going to stores or other public places.
3. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
    a. Use them before entering and after exiting stores or other public buildings.
4. Consider wearing disposable gloves when filling up at the gas station or touching surfaces prone to high degrees of viral and bacterial contamination.

Stay at home if you feel sick
a. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 contact your health provider by email or phone. If you don't have a healthcare provider, contact the Gallatin City County Public Health Department.
b. Do not leave home until cleared by your healthcare provider.
c. If you live with others, see the section about taking care of COVID-19 patients at home.
d. This includes all respiratory infections, including colds and the "flu".

I've Already Had COVID-19, Should I Get Vaccinated?
YES.

"Natural immunity" after a COVID-19 infection helps prevent reinfection. However, the antibody levels and immune system responsiveness is significantly improved after vaccination among people who have previously had COVID-19. There are many in other countries, such as Brazil and South Africa, who have become re-infected with variant strains of COVID-19. Vaccines have been very effective against these mutant variants and should reduce the risk of re-infection.