

## More than 100 vaccinated Cattaraugus County residents are breakthrough cases

By RICK MILLER Olean Times Herald



Registered Nurse Dorothy Lockridge administers the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in June to a Cattaraugus County resident.  
Rick Miller/Olean Times Herald

OLEAN — More than 100 Cattaraugus County residents who were fully vaccinated against COVID-19 have contracted the coronavirus — they are known as breakthrough cases.

Dr. Kevin D. Watkins, the county's public health director, told members of the Board of Health on Wednesday that 113 people, or 0.35% who are fully vaccinated, and 61, or 0.18% of people who had just one shot, have tested positive for COVID-19.

Cattaraugus County has reported 6,174 positive tests for COVID-19 since March 2020.

The breakthrough cases of people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 included 41 people who received the Johnson & Johnson single shot, 36 who got the Moderna vaccine, 35 who had Pfizer and one who got the Astra-Zeneca vaccine.

There are 32,672 county residents who are fully vaccinated and 35,552 who have had one dose. That's 46.3% of the population who are fully vaccinated and 55.8% of those age 18 and older who have received at least one dose.

The percentage of county residents who are vaccinated grows with age. Only 21% of those ages 1-19 are vaccinated as compared to 36% for the 20-34 age group, 55% for 35-64 and 87% for those 65 and older.

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Watkins said July COVID-19 cases spiked in the county with 260 people who were unvaccinated and 53 who were fully or partially vaccinated.

Watkins has noted that the COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing serious illness requiring hospitalization and death.

The delta variant of COVID-19 is “highly suspected” in the surge in cases that had slowed in late June and early July, Watkins told the Board of Health.

The Food and Drug Administration has approved a third dose of Moderna and Pfizer for those who are immunocompromised. Approval for booster shots for Moderna and Pfizer could come as soon as Sept. 20, Watkins said.

The New York State Department of Health has issued regulations requiring vaccinations for staff in hospitals, nursing homes, diagnostic and treatment centers, adult care facilities, certified home health groups, long-term home health care agencies, licensed home care service agencies and Hospice.

Watkins said employees of hospitals and nursing homes had until Sept. 27 to get their first vaccine dose and all others need to get a first dose by Oct. 7.

With rising COVID-19 cases, Watkins said residents should continue to take precautions, even if they are vaccinated, and be socially distant and wear a mask indoors in communities where there is substantial or high COVID-19 transmission rates.

Having completed a series of vaccinations at schools, Watkins said the Health Department will again focus on vaccine hesitancy among residents. A vaccination clinic is scheduled for today at Bethany Lutheran Church on Buffalo Street and Sept. 11 and 12 at the Olean Campus of Jamestown Community College.

Watkins also addressed a rising problem with people taking a concentrated form of Ivermectin, a treatment for parasites in horses and cows when they can't get a prescription from a doctor. The concentrated form is toxic to humans and can result in an emergency room visit.

“The FDA has not approved Ivermectin for COVID-19 treatment,” Watkins said.

Approved medical treatments, Watkins said, include steroids, anticoagulants, Remdesivir and monoclonal antibodies.

Watkins also briefed the Board of Health on a new state program, the New York State Public Health Corps, a group of 1,000 people who will be assigned to county health departments for two years to aid in the COVID-19 fight.

Cattaraugus County expects to get eight Health Corps fellows, who will earn \$41,000 a year, he said.

ALSO WEDNESDAY, John Rendall, president and general manager of CH2M HILL, the contractor for the **West Valley Demonstration Project** cleanup, briefed the Board of Health on plans to begin the open-air demolition of the Main Plant Process Building at **WVDP** this December.

Rendall emphasized that most of the radioactive contamination in the building — including seven miles of piping and 50 tons of equipment — has been removed over the past 20 years. More is scheduled to be removed prior to demolition. COVID-19 protocols have slowed the last of the decontamination efforts.

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The building will be taken down block by block over a 30-month period, Rendall said. Water will be used to keep dust down during the demolition. The plan does not include use of a wrecking ball or explosives, he emphasized.

Fixed air monitors at the demolition site will provide real-time data on radioactivity. There are more air monitoring stations at the edge of the demolition site as well as offsite stations.

The company, along with the Department of Energy and **New York State Energy Research and Development Authority** will conduct another town hall meeting to explain the demolition plans to area residents on Sept. 29. Two meetings with residents were held last week.