

SEP 21, 2021 | BY SOUTHCOAST HEALTH

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Southcoast Health Vaccination Clinics

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I hope this letter finds you and your loved ones healthy and well. The past 19 months have been challenging in so many ways for all of us, which is why I'm writing to you today.

When the pandemic first emerged locally in March of 2020, none of us quite knew what to expect. Here at Southcoast Health, we diligently focused on understanding as much as we could about the fast-moving virus and providing our utmost support to the community as we took on this crisis together.

Our clinical and support services teams on the #SouthcoastFrontlines began the fiercest battle of their professional and personal lives. The fear of all that was unknown did not deter our heroic nurses, physicians, technologists and support service staff as they donned into and out of personal protective equipment (PPE) multiple times a day to care for our patients.

Supporting their friends and co-workers on the frontlines, our administrative team worked seven days a week, ensuring that we provided enough PPE, staffing, safety protocols and leadership to effectively combat this invisible and insidious enemy.

And you, our amazing community, once again supported Southcoast Health in so many meaningful ways. You scoured your homes and businesses for useable PPE to donate to our staff. You generously contributed philanthropically to support our mission. And most importantly, you heeded the guidance that was shared from clinical professionals, both nationally and locally, who spoke about important measures to keep us all safe, such as masking and social distancing.

This is all real-life experience – not hyperbole.

The Choice Is Personal. The Impact Is Universal.

So, why do I write to you today, a year and a half after the start of this pandemic? I do so out of increasing concern. **Concern for you, your loved ones, my loved ones and the entire Southcoast Health family. I write to you out of concern for our community, our state and our country.**

I write to you today with a message on the most immediate and pressing issue *still* facing all of us – COVID-19.

I want to clarify that my message today is not political. It is not left or right, blue or red, Democrat or Republican. My message will not speak to the numerous challenges we are faced with as a society, a country, or a planet. There are certainly many issues worthy of respectful dialogue and understanding, but not in this message.

I recognize there are many differing viewpoints on vaccination, government-imposed safety mandates and precautions and their impacts on everything from businesses and our economy, to childhood development and civil liberties.

I also recognize that many of our viewpoints are only entrenched through what is populated on our social media feeds and other unreliable sources of bias. These information sources purposefully re-affirm our pre-conceived beliefs by using algorithms that learn what type of information we want more of and providing it to us, often without us even realizing it.

I ask all of us to ignore the noise and nonsense, and find the substance, facts and truth. I encourage you to consult with your physician or a trusted medical professional who has studied the virus and whose opinion is based in factual evidence. Someone who is concerned about your health and well-being.

The reality we are all experiencing, is that the *only way* we will overcome COVID-19 is through timely vaccination.

I must be clear: I am very concerned. Locally, our region is at a **55%** full vaccination rate. Some communities are higher and some are lower. Unfortunately, none of our communities is high enough to significantly decrease the spread of this virus.

The facts ... the science ... the truth ... is clear. As the virus sustains itself, it mutates. As it mutates, it creates additional strains of the virus called variants. The proliferation of these variants is proving to be even more dangerous than the version before. It is very possible that if we allow this virus to continue, a variant may emerge that is completely immune from all of our vaccines.

This is why time is of the essence. **We all must accept the personal responsibility we have to each other. To** our family, friends, neighbors and loved ones, to do whatever we can to protect each other. To the frontline workers who every day continue to tirelessly care for patients dying from this disease.

How many more stories must we hear of individuals who went unvaccinated thinking they were stronger than the virus, or that the virus wasn't real, or that they considered themselves healthy only to get the virus and end up in the ICU struggling to breathe and fighting to survive, begging their families to get their shots?

The overwhelming, fact-based reality is the most at-risk person to contract the virus, get critically ill or even die from COVID-19 is someone who is unvaccinated.

These unvaccinated individuals never thought it would be them, looking up from a hospital bed at a loved one, or even worse having to FaceTime a loved one, realizing that may likely be the last time they say "I love you" to that person. They usually follow that with "I'm so sorry to do this to you, I wish I got vaccinated" and "Please tell our family and friends to not make the same mistake I did, get vaccinated before it's too late."

Please don't let that be you. Please don't take the chance. Please ask yourself why you or a loved one may be holding out on getting vaccinated, and consult with a medical professional about your concerns. Is it truly worth the risk?

Southcoast Vaccination Clinics

Southcoast is currently offering free and convenient COVID-19 vaccines **across southeastern Massachusetts:**

- Truesdale Health in Fall River, Tuesdays, 9am-3pm
- Former Vanity Fair Outlet in Dartmouth, Wednesdays, 9a-3p, Thursdays, 4-8pm, and Saturdays, 10am-2pm
- Rosebrook in Wareham, Thursdays, 10am-2pm

For more information, and to quickly self-schedule an appointment online, please visit [COVID-19 Vaccination Information – Southcoast Health](#).

As variants continue to spread, vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and loved ones, and our community from COVID. Please get vaccinated. Do it for yourself. Do it for your loved ones. Do it for the nurses, physicians and care teams who are exhausted and need our help. Do it so we can truly get back to living life, not fearing death.

With gratitude and optimism,

Keith A. Hovan

President & CEO

Southcoast Health

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