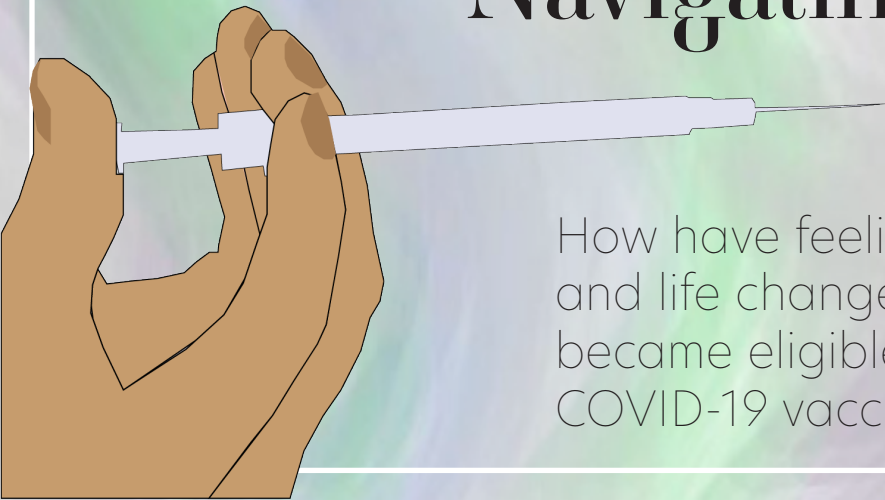
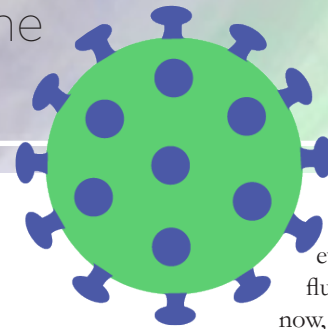


# Navigating COVID-19



How have feelings about school and life changed since teenagers became eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine?



On April 5, the State of Iowa opened up COVID-19 vaccination eligibility to all Iowans over the age of 12. This means all high schoolers are now eligible and some middle schoolers. As eligibility increases, so does controversy. What is the best way to distribute vaccines? Some states have adopted a centralized approach. A Twitter account run by a good samaritan is as close as Iowa has gotten to a centralized method for announcing new appointment listings across the state (@IAVaccineAlerts).

"I decided to get vaccinated because I feel the faster we get vaccinated, the faster we can go back to something somewhat normal," senior Tessah Smith said.

Vaccine hesitancy is very common. Only two-thirds of Iowans actually want to get vaccinated. This presents a problem. If a majority of the population doesn't get vaccinated, herd immunity from COVID-19 will be very difficult to achieve.

"We have a large percent of staff that are vaccinated and that gives them protection, but as a community, my goal as a nurse is that we [East High] would reach herd immunity. The way we're going to get to herd immunity is through vaccination... I am a huge proponent of vaccination," school nurse Vicki Bonnet said.

Varying side effects and concern for potential long term effects of the vaccine are frequently cited reasons for not wanting to be vaccinated. After Smith was vaccinated,

she experienced severe side effects.

"Emotionally I was actually somewhat relieved, but I was so nervous [to get the vaccine]. I had such bad butterflies in my stomach before and after I got the shot. They give you so many papers and saying the side affects and what they could be and what to look out for it scared me, to be honest. Physically, after I got vaccinated I got a huge headache. It was the weirdest type of headache. It was like right behind the eyes and dull across your forehead. I had no appetite at all. I went to the ER later that night because it hurt to take a deep breath and to yawn. I just felt like absolute crap after the sun went down. I was shaking and puking. It was horrible. For the next three days I was puking every night and had the worst headache and stomach ache. Even now my headaches are so easily obtained and it sucks. I have never been so tired since I got it," Smith said.

Despite all this, Smith recommends you get vaccinated when you have the chance.

"I was hesitant at first but it's worth it. We're probably going to have this vaccine

every year like the flu shot. Get it done now, rather than later to get it done and over with," Smith said.

Des Moines Public Schools have been operating 100 percent in person since the middle of February, and school activities have started to go back to normal as the end-of-year events approach. Despite all of this, East has maintained relatively low community spread of COVID-19.

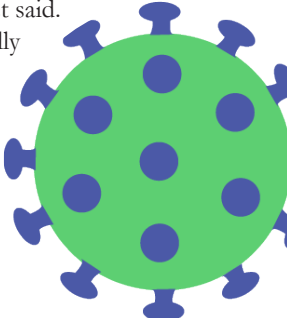
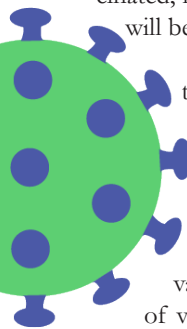
"We're always dealing with situations in the nurses office relating to COVID-19, whether it's a parent has it and their children are quarantined,

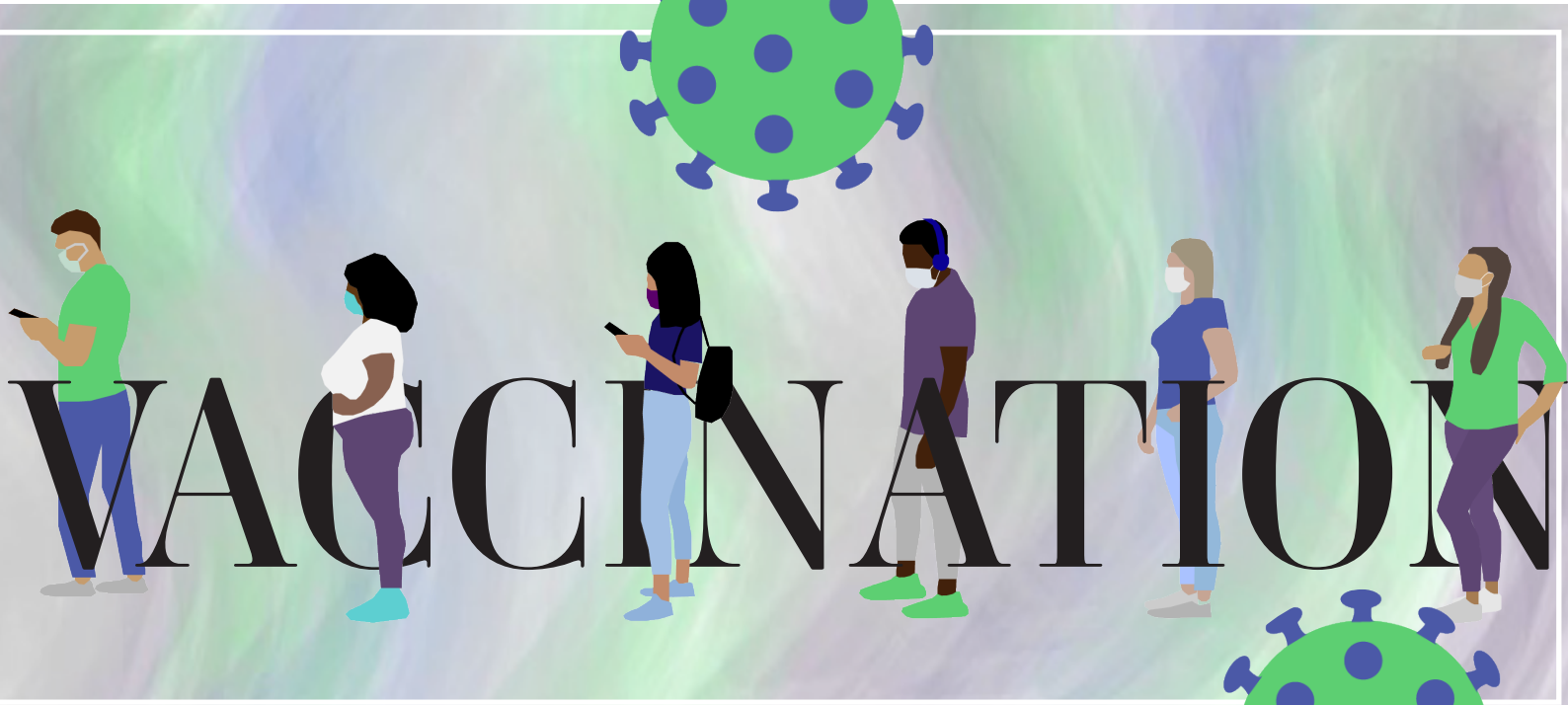
or they were exposed at a family gathering, and so it seems like we're always dealing with something like that on a daily basis. I have been very impressed with the fact that there doesn't seem to be a lot of school spread and I think that does attribute to a good level of compliance of students with the mitigation strategies," Bonnet said.

When students originally returned to school 100% in-person, most teachers were yet to be vaccinated. Many students are relieved that they are now

"I decided to get vaccinated because I feel the faster we get vaccinated, the faster we can go back to something somewhat normal"

Tessah Smith





eligible.

“Now that I am fully vaccinated I feel so vaccinated I feel so much more comfortable about being in school. While the risk is very low I know that I was extra cautious about everything I did and keeping track of everyone who I was near, just incase they test positive. Now that I am vaccinated it makes me a lot less stressed and I am more able to relax and have have fun at school, it’s like a weight has been lifted off my chest,” junior Arlene Nepple said.

As of the end of April, Hyvee Pharmacy is offering walk-in vaccination appointments. Overcoming vaccine hesitancy is how herd immunity will be achieved.

“I would say to other students that may not want to get the vaccine that it is

like voting, you may not think your vote matters, but in the long time it does just like one more vaccinated person brings us closer to herd immunity so that we can get life back to normal,” Nepple said.

Until everyone can be vaccinated, it is important that masks continue to be worn and social distance continue to be kept.

“This isn’t over yet. It really won’t be over until we get some herd immunity through vaccination,” Bonnet said.



“This isn’t over yet.”

Vicki Bonnet

## COVID VACCINES BY THE NUMBERS



41%

of all Iowans are fully vaccinated

346 million

doses have been administered nationwide

August 9th

is the date by which the CDC projects Iowa to be 85% vaccinated

14 months

spent fighting COVID-19 so far