

The Hunt for Second-Dose Summer

By Brock Weir

Given the shortage of COVID-19 vaccines that became the hallmark of the first quarter of the year, setting the goal at a 'two-dose summer' may have been seen as a lofty dream at the time.

We were lagging behind the world in rolling out our first shots, as infographics circulating through social media and beyond wanted to underscore 'despite the fact that many such infographics pegged our vaccine rates against the comparatively sparsely populated non-nations of Jersey, Guernsey, and St. Helena, among others.

Not quite comparing apples to apples but, unfortunately, there was some truth to the point they were trying to make, despite a couple of missed targets.

Now, here we are, on track to regaining some sense of normalcy with second shots for many of us now coming in relatively quick succession after our first doses.

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that patience is more than just a virtue. The pace for most things under its yoke has done anything but quicken. Most of us have, after all, been spending the majority of time at home trying to find our excitement where we can in our individual attempts to flatten the curve. When there's a good excuse to go out and do something 'anything' time seems to kick into hyperdrive, making the thrill pass all too quickly, all for it to come to a screeching halt with the task completed and we're homeward bound again.

For better or worse, our new normal right now seems to be one of 'hurry up and wait.'

Take, for instance, the rollout for the second dose.

Tasked as I was the first go-around, a couple of weeks ago I started my Monday in front of a computer screen. Sure, in this line of work I'm almost always in front of said screen, but this time was a bit different: I had to secure a second dose appointment for my mom.

To say securing the first one was a challenge might be something of an understatement. There were limited doses to go around, so I knew at the time I had to log on at the stroke of 8 a.m. to secure one. Then 9 a.m. rolled around. 10. 11. 11.30. By noon, it seemed like a lost cause. All area clinics were fully booked some time before I was let out of the virtual waiting room 'a visual I'm sure we can all agree we would prefer never to have to see again' and I was out of luck.

Or was I?

Things were changing rapidly as people who secured appointments near the end of the date allotments shopped around and snapped up appointments secured that morning and given up almost just as fast as earlier appointments miraculously appeared in the system.

Refresh.

Refresh.

Refresh.

That was my life for the next 24 hours and then, a single appointment appeared right before my eyes 'on Easter Monday, no less' and I pounced on that quicker than I ever thought possible.

As second doses rolled around, I was braced for the worst.

Coffee was brewed, bread was toasted and buttered, I became at peace with whatever virtual hellscape awaited me, and logged in.

After just an hour or so later, I was released from the virtual waiting room and within a few seconds was able to snag one just two days later.

Things were looking up and it got the week off on the right foot.

Then came word by the end of the week that the time to register myself, based on the date of my first shot, would be this past Monday, June 14.

Another Monday, another alarm set far earlier than I would have liked, coffee and toast waiting for a bit later given the easy and breezy experience securing my mother's second dose? and then 9 a.m. rolled around. 10. 11. 11.30. By noon, I was released from the queue into a sea of nothingness, refreshing and refreshing throughout the rest of the day to the point that I was at least three hours behind in my work. All for naught.

Disappointed and tired, I crawled into bed that night telling myself that although I struck out earlier that day, things might change as new appointments were due to be released throughout the week.

The following day, the alarm was once again set earlier than I would like, needing to catch up on everything I didn't have time for on Monday. Coffee in hand to make up for the previous morning's draining experience, I logged on, clicked refresh one more time, and lo and behold a lone appointment popped up, scheduled for just 90 minutes later.

Needless to say, I flew to make it. And so I did.

Although this last shot was slightly less satisfying from a physical standpoint than the first as my nurse was stealthy with her syringe and it was in and out before I had time to feel anything, let alone the singular exhilaration of the first shot's twinge knowing the coveted formula was working its way into my system. Getting that shot of hope was nonetheless an emotional experience ? even if I didn't feel the sweet sting of safety.

It took a little while for the fact it was now done to completely sink in. Once it did, I began making a mental list of all the things I would soon be able to do once the Pfizerization was complete. A mental list only, mind you, as we still don't know what the future is going to bring.

Over the last few weeks, we have seen examples from all around the world on what our own two-dose summer might look like, with New York City and Los Angeles opening back up, parts of Europe already back into the swing of things, and even our leader socializing maskless ? but distanced ? at last week's G7 meeting.

We have an idea of what's coming, but, as has been the case with all steps of this pandemic, absolutely nothing is set in stone.

Getting there will only be due to our collective efforts to get done what we know we all need to do and continue to be mindful of our friends and neighbours.

We just have to be patient, both with the vaccination process and what the end of the vaccination process will mean for our future.

It might seem like we're hurrying up to wait once again, but once the time comes, it will be all worthwhile.