



VACCINES

Effective 3/19/21

The best vaccine is the one that is available on the day it is offered to you.

To date, AHS has administered almost **228,000** doses of vaccine through its program, which began on December 15.

- **Please note: The CDC currently recommends not getting other vaccines 14 days before or after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. If a patient presents at an AHS vaccine clinic and has had any other vaccination in the past 14 days, the COVID-19 vaccination cannot be given and the prospective vaccination candidate will be rescheduled for when they are beyond the 14 day window.**
- If you had COVID-19 and recovered, you can safely delay vaccination for three months since there is little or no risk of reinfection in that time. However, there is no contraindication to getting the vaccine as soon as 10 days from being well. Since you should maintain your immunity for those 90 days, it is recommended to give vaccine to those who are not immune.
- If you have questions about the vaccine and its safety, ask someone you trust.
- **If you receive the vaccine, you will still need to wear a mask and practice social distancing and hand hygiene. The vaccine has shown great efficacy to protect the vaccine recipient, but there may still be the possibility of transmitting the virus to others if you are exposed to the virus.**
- Which vaccine should I take? Take the one that is available to you. There is no objective data to recommend any over another among the three approved vaccines.
- If you are hesitating about vaccination, consider the following:
 - COVID-19 mortality is reported just under 2%.
 - Most people recover completely in about two weeks.
 - There are some people (reported as high as 50%) who continue to experience symptoms after initial recovery. They are self-described “long-haulers.”

They describe the following symptoms:

- Fatigue
 - Shortness of breath
 - Cough
 - Joint pain
 - Chest pain
 - Muscle pain or headache
 - Fast or pounding headache
 - Persistent loss of smell or taste
 - Memory, concentration, sleep problems
 - Rash or hair loss
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- Many long-term effects of COVID-19 are still not known.
 - Vaccination significantly reduces your risk of having an infection!
 - The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have recommended that vaccine not be withheld from pregnant or lactating women. Pregnant women are likely to develop more severe COVID-19 compared to non-pregnant patients. The vaccine was not studied in pregnant women, and women who are pregnant or likely to be pregnant soon should consider potential risks/benefits in their decision to be vaccinated and consult their physician.

MORE ON VACCINES

Each state is determining its own distribution plan. As per the NJ state plan, which is fluid and has been expanded, vaccinations are currently available to:

- Individuals in Phase 1A – This group includes paid and unpaid persons serving in health care settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials as well as residents and staff of long-term congregate settings.
- Sworn law enforcement (police officers and others), fire professionals, other first responders
- **Pre-K to 12 educators and staff**
- **Childcare workers in licensed and registered settings**
- Individuals aged 65 and older
- Individuals ages 16-64 with medical conditions, [as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), that increase the risk of severe illness from the virus, including *Cancer, chronic kidney disease, COPD, Down Syndrome, heart conditions (such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies), obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 kg/m² or higher but < 40 kg/m²), severe obesity (BMI ≥ 40 kg/m²), sickle cell disease, Type 2 diabetes and smoking.*

- **Transportation workers**
- **Additional public safety workers**
- **Individuals experiencing homelessness and those living in a shelter, including domestic violence centers**
- **Migrant farmworkers**
- **Members of tribal communities**

Also, now eligible are individuals with the following conditions that might be at increased risk for severe illness from the virus , will be added to the list of individuals at high risk and eligible for vaccination:

- Asthma (moderate-to-severe)
- Cerebrovascular disease (affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain)
- Cystic fibrosis
- Hypertension or high blood pressure
- Neurologic conditions, such as dementia
- Liver disease
- Overweight (BMI > 25 kg/m², but < 30 kg/m²)
- Pulmonary fibrosis (having damaged or scarred lung tissues)
- Thalassemia (a type of blood disorder)
- Type 1 diabetes mellitus
- Note: Individuals who are in an immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines are also eligible but should follow CDC guidance and first discuss vaccination with their medical provider before receiving the vaccine.

Additionally, starting March 29, the following will be eligible:

- Food production, agriculture, and food distribution
- Eldercare and support
- Warehousing and logistics
- Social services support and staff
- Elections personnel
- Hospitality
- Medical supply chain
- Postal and shipping services
- Clergy
- Judicial system

The latest NJ eligibility criteria and vaccination phases can be found on the [NJ.gov website](#). Individuals in an immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant are also eligible but should follow CDC guidance and first discuss vaccination with their medical provider before receiving the vaccine.

There is a goal to vaccinate 4.7M adults in NJ to reach 70% within six months. Some states have used different criteria for priority and faced challenges of demand greatly exceeding supply. Doses of vaccine are still limited but are expected to improve significantly by the end of March.

Individuals interested in receiving the vaccine, including your family members, can pre-register for appointment alerts from Atlantic Health System at www.atlantichealth.org/covidvaccine. Other community-based opportunities also exist for health care workers and other eligible individuals to be vaccinated. [The New Jersey Department of Health has published a robust list of locations](#) where eligible individuals can now make an appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

- **Do you have a reason not to get vaccinated?** We know risk factors for mortality and morbidity but cannot predict an individual's course. The current Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are 95% effective.
- **Will vaccines continue to work with the report of mutations?** Vaccine mutations remain a top story in the news. The mutation first identified in the UK known as B.1.1.7 is more contagious, but this mutation is not thought to affect vaccine efficacy. The mutation first seen in the South Africa variant (501Y.V1) and separately seen in a Brazil variant (B.1.1.28) involves the spike protein and may impact vaccine effectiveness and is being closely studied. So far, the UK variant is spreading the fastest. New variants of the COVID-19 virus will continue to emerge. There is a serious NYC variant B.1.526 that first appeared in November that now accounts for 1 in 4 isolates in New York. This mutation may weaken the effectiveness of the vaccine and is being watched closely. The mechanism of spread remains the same, primarily droplet spread. So continue to wear a mask, socially distance and avoid crowds and crowded inside situations.

Data from Israel shows a 99% reduction in risk of death two weeks after 2nd dose. It was found to be 94% effective against symptomatic infection and 89% effective against infection of any kind! They are opening up and reducing restrictions for those who have been vaccinated. This real-world study will add significantly to our plan for a new normal here in the US. There is no perfect way to get everyone vaccinated, and the best solutions are likely found on a local level. NJ is getting the vaccine out through multiple channels. Currently, there is limited availability, but there will be vaccine for everyone.

AFTER THE VACCINE (Our expert opinion and not endorsed by CDC or NJDOH)

We need to start talking about and debating the path to the new normal.

Whether you are vaccinated or not remember these 3 C's to avoid:

- Closed spaces
- Crowded spaces
- Close-contact settings