

## Vaccine Eligibility Update

§ Effective, January 14, individuals 16-64 with certain medical conditions, as defined by the CDC<<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>>, and individuals 65+ are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in New Jersey. These individuals join health care workers, individuals in high-risk congregate care settings, and first responders as eligible.

§ The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for persons 16 years of age and older under the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization, however the Moderna vaccine is recommended for individuals 18 years and older. Not all sites administer both vaccines, so it is important to check with your vaccination site before scheduling a visit to ensure you are eligible.

§ Individuals who are pregnant and those 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.

§ Smoking is included as a risk factor on the CDC list of high risk conditions and individuals 16-64 with a smoking addiction are now eligible for the vaccine. Smoking put individuals at higher risk for more severe disease. If an individual who smokes get COVID, they face a significantly high risk for severe complications, mechanical ventilation, and death. Our goal is to save as many lives as possible and to promote vaccination among the groups at highest risk. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the US as well as in NJ (except for COVID-19). We encourage anyone who smokes to quit, and to seek support through our Quitline at [www.njquitline.org](http://www.njquitline.org)<<http://www.njquitline.org>>

§ Vaccinations are available to individuals who live, work, or are being educated in New Jersey. So some individuals who are not NJ residents may be vaccinated in this State. Some county-operated sites may restrict vaccination at their locations to those who work, live, or are being educated in their county. However, the State encourages all vaccination sites to make appointments available to all eligible individuals.

§ Residents of group homes and long-term care facilities are currently eligible for a vaccine and permitted to schedule an appointment at an open vaccine location.

§ Vaccination sites have been directed to establish waiting lists and not waste any dose. If a vaccination site has a vial left at the end of the day and can't find someone eligible to vaccinate, the site is permitted to in urgent circumstances, vaccinate an individual not currently in an eligible priority group.

§ An announcement regarding the remainder of essential workers and individuals at high risk who will be eligible under Phase 1B and Phase 1C will be forthcoming.

§ The movement between vaccination eligibility phases is fluid. One phase may overlap with another- not all individuals in one phase will be vaccinated before opening to additional groups.

§ The NJ Vaccination Scheduling System (NJVSS) provides individuals with the opportunity to pre-register for the vaccine, to be notified when they are eligible, and receive information that an appointment is available to them. Eligible individuals may also visit the COVID Information

Hub<<https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/vaccine>> to identify a vaccination location if appointments are not immediately available on NJVSS.

§ Information about the number of doses administered in the State and demographic information can be found on the COVID Dashboard<[https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019\\_dashboard.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_dashboard.shtml)>.

§ A consumer call center will be activated shortly and will assist individuals without internet access in scheduling appointments, and will assist in answering general inquiries and questions.

§ The vaccination of individuals in high-risk, congregate care settings such as nursing homes, assisted living residences, IDD group homes, etc. is expected to take weeks. Doses for these settings have already been reserved in the State's allocation. These efforts are primarily driven by the Federal Pharmacy Partnership LTC program (Walgreens/CVS) who is prioritizing vaccination in skilled nursing facilities/nursing homes and assisted living residences first. Those in other congregate care settings are a priority but may not have been contacted by the pharmacy program or DOH on their status yet.

§ Health care workers eligible in Phase 1A include paid and unpaid persons working in health care settings who have the potential for exposure to infectious material – regardless of their employment status, professional credentials, or the setting where care is provided. There is no exhaustive list of each eligible health care worker-this was intentionally broad so the State does not exclude anyone who should otherwise be eligible.

§ Individuals who are providing paid or unpaid health care services, like essential caregivers (i.e. a daughter caring for her elderly mother with severe neurological disorder in her home instead of her mother receiving care in a nursing facility) are currently eligible for the vaccine as health care workers.

§ Although the State's Interim Vaccination Plan<<https://nj.gov/health/legal/covid19/NJ%20Interim%20COVID-19%20Vaccination%20Plan%20-%20Revised%2012-15-20.pdf>> broadly outlined Phase 1B to include essential workers and Phase 1C to include adults 65+ and adults with high-risk medical conditions.

§ The State's Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) uses the CDC ACIP recommendations for phase eligibility to inform their deliberations, but the State's phases may differ from the CDC recommendations.

§ The State is not mandating vaccination at this time.

§ During this period of limited vaccine supply, the State's focus is on offering the vaccine to those at highest risk who are willing to be vaccinated.

§ COVID-19 vaccines will be made available to individuals regardless of insurance coverage status. Individuals won't pay coinsurance, deductibles, or copayments. Providers that administer vaccinations to patients without health insurance or whose insurance does not provide coverage of vaccination administration fees may not charge enrollees directly for any vaccine administration costs.

§ All members of the public are directed to the NJ COVID-19 Information Hub<<https://covid19.nj.gov/index.html>>, covid19.nj.gov, for information about vaccination eligibility and how to make an appointment.