

COVID-19 Update

December 7: Vaccine Availability and Distribution

Today's issue features information about the availability and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will review the application submitted by Pfizer/BioNTech for its COVID-19 vaccine on December 10. Moderna also has submitted an application to the FDA, which will be reviewed on December 17. It is anticipated that the FDA will grant Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for both vaccines following a detailed review. Once the vaccines are authorized for use, Northwestern Medicine is expected to receive its supply of doses. Vaccine availability will be limited initially, with plans to increase supply in the weeks and months that follow.

Based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), initial doses of the vaccine will be designated for healthcare personnel and residents of long-term care facilities. Once the vaccine is authorized for general use and more widely available, we will share information about vaccine administration for our patients.

When COVID-19 vaccines become available, NM will follow a phased process for vaccinating employees and physicians. Unlike annual flu vaccination, COVID-19 vaccination will be voluntary. Additional information about distribution will be provided once vaccine availability is confirmed.

After healthcare workers and residents of long-term care facilities, the next group to be offered the vaccine will be essential workers, followed by adults with high-risk medical conditions and older adults. Together, these groups represent 70 to 100 million people in the U.S. Vaccine production is expected to improve over time, but it may be spring or summer before the general population will have an opportunity to get vaccinated. If your patients have questions about the vaccines, please direct them to the [Vaccines page on the CDC website](#) for more information.

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use a novel technology — mRNA. Unlike many vaccines that require an injection with a weakened or inactivated virus, mRNA vaccines transcribe protein that triggers an immune response. Publicly released data from the Pfizer vaccine study demonstrate that it is 95% effective in preventing severe disease. The vaccine requires two doses, 21 days apart. Similarly, data from Moderna shows that its vaccine is 94.5% effective; it requires two doses, 28 days apart.

While these results are encouraging, it will be several months before there is enough vaccine available for the entire U.S. population. Until then, a continued focus on masking, physical distancing and hand hygiene remains the best defense against the spread of COVID-19 infection.

For the most up-to-date information about government planning efforts and frequently asked questions, visit the [Vaccines page on the CDC website](#). More information about NM vaccine availability and distribution will soon be available on the [Treatment Resources page on Physician Forum](#) and the [Treatment Resources page on NM Interactive](#) (login required).

Thank you to all NM physicians and clinicians for your continued commitment and leadership in providing safe, high-quality, *Patients First* care.



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