

# COVID-19 Update

## February 17: NM Updates Outpatient Visitor Policy, Dose Effectiveness of mRNA Vaccines, CDC Updates Vaccination Guidance for Immunocompromised Individuals, and Oral Treatments Webinar

*Today's issue features updates to the NM outpatient visitor policy regarding the number of companions permitted to accompany a patient visiting an NM outpatient facility. It also includes data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about dose effectiveness of mRNA vaccines, as well as updated CDC guidance for the vaccination of immunocompromised individuals and a link to a recording of last week's webinar about two new oral medications for the treatment of COVID-19 in high-risk patients.*

### **NM UPDATES OUTPATIENT VISITOR POLICY**

Effective Monday, February 21, the Diagnostic Testing, Surgery, Outpatient Facilities and Immediate Care Centers visitor policy will be adjusted to permit one companion in all outpatient settings.

The policy now allows:

- One companion in NM physician clinics, outpatient departments and diagnostic testing areas.
- One companion in Immediate Care Centers. To meet physical distancing requirements in the waiting room, visitors may be asked to wait in a public lobby or in their car until the patient is in an exam room.
- Exceptions for additional companions may be made at the discretion of the clinical care team.

All companions must be 18 or older; however, exceptions will be made if a patient's parent is younger than 18.

The visitor and companion policy for NM inpatient facilities and emergency departments remains unchanged. For more information, please view the [Guidelines for Outpatient Visitors](#).

### **DOSE EFFECTIVENESS OF mRNA VACCINES**

Last week, the CDC released [study data](#) demonstrating higher vaccine effectiveness against COVID-19-associated emergency department and urgent care visits and hospitalizations after the third dose of an mRNA vaccine than after the second dose, but effectiveness waned over time

The study included individuals who received either a third primary dose or a booster dose following the two-dose primary series.

During the omicron-dominant period, vaccine effectiveness was 87% against COVID-19-associated ED and urgent care visits and 91% against hospitalization during the two months following a third dose. Effectiveness decreased to 66% and 78% by the fourth month after a third dose. For both delta- and omicron-dominant periods, vaccine effectiveness was generally higher for protection against hospitalization than against ED and urgent care visits. Overall, vaccine effectiveness was lower during omicron than during delta, after accounting for number of vaccine doses received and time since vaccination.

CDC recommends that all persons ages 12 years and over receive a booster dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine at least five months after completing a primary mRNA vaccination series, and that immunocompromised persons receive a third primary dose.

For additional information and guidance on patient vaccination, please visit [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Approved or Authorized in the United States](#) on the CDC website. To find a vaccination location, visit [COVID-19 Vaccines for People Age 12 and Older](#) on nm.org.

#### **CDC UPDATES VACCINATION GUIDANCE FOR IMMUNOCOMPROMISED INDIVIDUALS**

On February 11, the CDC **updated** its vaccination guidance for moderately or severely immunocompromised people. The changes include the following:

- Clarification of existing recommendation to receive a three-dose mRNA vaccine primary series followed by a booster dose for a total of four doses
- New guidance to shorten the interval between completion of the mRNA vaccine primary series and the booster dose to at least three months (instead of five months)
- New guidance for those who received the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine to receive an additional primary dose and a booster dose, for a total of three doses to be up to date

Included with the updates is an easy-to-follow [COVID-19 Vaccination Schedule for People With Moderate or Severe Immunocompromise](#), which can be referenced for patient discussions.

For additional information and guidance on patient vaccination, please visit [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Approved or Authorized in the United States](#) on the CDC website. For vaccination location information, visit [COVID-19 Vaccines for People Age 12 and Older](#) on nm.org.

#### **ORAL TREATMENTS WEBINAR**

If you missed the February 10 event, a recording of the [COVID-19 Outpatient Oral Therapies Information Session](#) is now available for viewing by all physicians and clinicians.

Presented by Infectious Disease Specialist **Michael G. Ison, MD**, and Infectious Disease Clinical Pharmacist W. Justin Moore, PharmD, BCPS, BCIDP, the webinar focuses on the effectiveness of two new oral medications — **nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid)** and **molnupiravir (Lagevrio)** — for the treatment of COVID-19 in high-risk patients. The webinar also covered indications for use, drug interactions and the ordering process.

The availability of these medications remains limited. Please continue to discuss alternative options with the patient if the prescription cannot be filled. Current allocations can be viewed at [healthdata.gov](https://healthdata.gov). For more information about oral treatments, please visit the [Treatment Resources page](#) on Physician Forum and [NMI](#) (login required).

---

The number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 continues to decline across the health system and is at the lowest level since the beginning of the omicron surge. As a result, NM has reactivated all surgical cases and procedures that were postponed. As vaccination guidance has changed for patients who are moderate to severely immunocompromised, please review the updated recommendations with these individuals.



**Gary A. Noskin, MD**  
Senior Vice President, Quality  
Northwestern Memorial HealthCare  
Chief Medical Officer  
Northwestern Memorial Hospital