

# COVID-19 Update

## February 19: Patient Vaccine Availability, Workforce Vaccination and On-site Operations, and South Africa Variant in Illinois

*Today's issue features an update on patient vaccine availability. It also includes information about workforce vaccination, on-site operations and safety measures in place across Northwestern Medicine, and the first case of the South Africa variant identified in Illinois.*

### **PATIENT VACCINE AVAILABILITY AND RELATED QUESTIONS**

NM has invited established patients 65 years and older to schedule a vaccination appointment. However, due to reduced supplies, first dose vaccination appointments are limited. Additional appointments will be added as vaccine supply becomes available.

**Second dose appointments are available for those who have received their first dose from NM and will be scheduled at the time of the initial dose. Please remind patients that vaccination is by appointment only, and due to limited supply, we are unable to accept walk-ins.**

Please encourage patients to **sign up for MyNM** if they are not already enrolled. Patient invitations will come through email if they have a MyNM account. If they do not have a MyNM account, they will be contacted by their preferred communication method – phone, text message or email.

### **What if a patient is unable to schedule an appointment at NM?**

Since vaccine supply remains limited, patients are encouraged to schedule an appointment at designated vaccination sites. Use the following links to find locations:

- **State of Illinois**
- **City of Chicago**
- **Cook County**
- **DeKalb County**
- **DuPage County**
- **Kane County**
- **Lake County**
- **McHenry County**
- **Will County**
- **CVS**
- **Hy-Vee**
- **Jewel-Osco**
- **Kroger**

- **Mariano's**
- **Meijer**
- **Walgreens**
- **Walmart**

### **What happens if a patient misses the 21- to 28-day window for the second dose?**

The second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine should be given as close to the recommended date as possible. However, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, if you must delay your second appointment, the second dose of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine may be given up to 42 days after the first dose. If you need to change the date of your second appointment, please call 312.694.6600.

### **How is NM making sure high-risk groups are receiving vaccinations?**

NM continues to invite and prioritize established patients based on age and those living in high hardship zip codes that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. High hardship zip codes are defined by a variety of indicators and conditions, including unemployment, poverty, per capita income, housing, education and dependency.

Updated patient vaccination information can be found on the [COVID-19 Vaccines page](#) on nm.org. Physician and provider vaccine resources are available on the [Vaccine and Treatment Resources page on Physician Forum](#) and the [Vaccine and Treatment Resources page on NM Interactive](#) (login required).

### **ON-SITE SAFETY MEASURES**

As vaccine distribution continues, it is important to note that guidelines established by the CDC, as well as state and local officials, remain in place. That includes the [City of Chicago Emergency Travel Order](#), universal masking and physical distancing. Additionally, all NM physicians and employees are required to complete the [NM Symptom Check](#) prior to coming onsite.

To date, 68% of the NM employed workforce has received a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and 64% of employees are fully vaccinated. With more members of the workforce getting vaccinated, rates of COVID-19 decreasing and ongoing safety measures, NM is developing plans for post-pandemic operations, including a future model for remote work.

In-person meetings in conference rooms, while masked, continue to be allowed as long as the posted capacity guidelines are followed. However, we are not permitting food or drink in conference rooms and we are not hosting community meetings at this time.

While the current vaccines are shown to be very effective, they are not 100%. To keep your family members, colleagues, patients and members of the community safe, especially those who have not yet received the vaccine, universal masking and physical distancing are still required in accordance with CDC guidelines. At work, masks may be removed only when you are sitting in an office or at a workstation alone, or when eating. Remember to maintain at least 6 feet of distance in break rooms when you are eating.

NM continues to offer COVID-19 vaccination to all NM physicians and staff. If you would like to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and have not yet done so, make sure you have completed the enrollment form and opted in. To enroll, click [here](#), sign in with your NM user ID and password, and click on COVID-19 vaccination enrollment. If you are unable to log in, please contact

[mynmservicecenter@nm.org](mailto:mynmservicecenter@nm.org). If you previously opted in or out and have changed your mind, you can log in and update your selection at any time.

### **FIRST CASE OF SOUTH AFRICAN VARIANT IDENTIFIED IN ILLINOIS**

The Illinois Department of Health (IDPH) and the Rock Island County Health Department **announced** [\[LINK\]](#) on Thursday, February 11, that the first case of the COVID-19 South Africa variant B.1.351 has been identified in Illinois. The CDC confirmed the variant in a Rock Island resident. Cases of the B.1.351 were first reported in the U.S. at the end of January. Illinois has also reported 22 cases of the B.1.1.7 variant, first identified in the United Kingdom.

Studies suggest that antibodies generated by the current COVID-19 vaccines recognize these variants and may offer some protection.

Public health experts are working to better understand the potential impact of this variant, including how the variant spreads and how it impacts people who are infected. The same measures that have helped slow the spread of COVID-19 will also help control the spread of variant strains. Wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet apart from others, avoiding crowds and washing hands frequently remain the best tools for preventing the spread of this virus.

For more information on emerging variants of SARS-CoV-2, visit the [Emerging SARS-CoV-2 Variant page](#) on the CDC website and [Tracking of Variants page](#) on the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID) website.

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Even after they have been vaccinated, please continue to remind your patients and colleagues about the importance of wearing a mask and physical distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Thank you for your continued commitment to our *Patients First* mission and active participation in the NM vaccination program.



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