Vermont COVID-19 Vaccine Program FAQ for Health Care Professionals

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Contact Information

If you have questions that are not answered in this document, please reach out by email. Use the email address below that aligns with the topic of your question.

- Ordering, vaccine storage & handling, vaccine-specific information: AHS.VDHImmunizationProgram@vermont.gov
- Immunization registry and reporting: IMR@vermont.gov
- Vaccine priority logistics and clinic planning: AHS.VDHHOCHospitalCommunicationBD@vermont.gov

Recent Announcements

December 31 HAN (Sent on January 4) : Guidance on Prioritization of Vaccination in Phase 1A and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations

December 24 HAN: General Information about the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines

December 18 HAN (Updated December 24th): Initial Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations - Updated
**Enrollment in the COVID-19 Vermont Vaccine Program**

For more information on Enrollment please read our Enrollment FAQ and Enrollment Process.

**Q:** I want to provide COVID-19 vaccine to my patients as soon as it is available. How do I sign up?  
**A:** For more information on Vermont’s plan for phased COVID-19 Vaccine rollout, see Vermont COVID-19 Vaccine Planning. Currently, enrollment is available to hospitals, primary care offices, any pharmacy not participating in a federal program, Urgent Care and Home Health Agencies. Enrollment is not yet opened to specialty providers, or correctional facilities. Enrollment in the state program does not mean you will receive vaccine immediately. Allocation is still very small, and currently, only hospitals and the Federal Pharmacy Partnership charged with vaccinating LTCF’s have been allocated state supplied COVID-19 vaccine. If you would like more information on enrollment, please reach out to AHS.VDHImmunizationProgram@vermont.gov.

**Q:** We are already enrolled in the VVP and administer the state-supplied vaccine. How do we request COVID-19 vaccine as well?  
**A:** The COVID-19 Vaccine enrollment process is separate from enrollment in the VCVP/VAVP programs. When your facility is eligible to enroll in the COVID-19 Vaccine Program, your primary vaccine contact will be sent an email.

**Vaccine Administration**

For comprehensive information about administering of COVID-19 vaccine to various groups, please refer to the Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States. In this document you will find information on immunizing:

- Patients with a history of or current SARS-CoV-2 infection
- Patients with known exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in both inpatient and community settings
- Patients with underlying health conditions
- Patients that are pregnant or lactating
- Patients who recently received passive antibody therapy

**Q:** Is a prescription necessary for a COVID-19 vaccine?  
**A:** No prescription is needed. Under an EUA, FDA has waived prescription requirements.

**Q:** Have the standing orders for COVID-19 vaccine administration been written yet? Are there separate standing orders for each COVID-19 vaccine?  
**A:** Yes, please refer to the Pfizer standing orders and Moderna standing orders.

**Q:** Is an informed consent form required for administration of vaccine under an Emergency Use Authorization?  
**A:** Written informed consent is not required for the administration of a vaccine authorized under an EUA. As part of the enrollment process, vaccine recipients provide permission or agreement to enroll in a registration system (e.g., privacy terms for use of personally identifiable information). This is separate from documenting informed consent for access to and administration of a vaccine.
However, institutions or facilities may require informed consent for vaccination. An EUA does not prohibit informed consent requirements.

**Q:** Are mRNA COVID-19 vaccines interchangeable?
**A:** No, safety and efficacy of a mixed series has not been evaluated. Persons initiating the vaccine series should complete the series with the same product. If two doses of different mRNA vaccine are inadvertently administered, no additional doses of either vaccine are recommended at this time. (This may be updated.)

**Q:** If planning a drive-through vaccination clinic, what ideas are there for monitoring people following vaccination?
**A:** Please see CDC’s Considerations for Planning Curbside/Drive-Through Vaccination Clinics

**Q:** Can providers bill health insurance for the vaccine administration fees? If so, is there a maximum allowable rate?
**A:** Providers may bill health insurance for vaccine administration fees. Section 203 of the CARES Act requires plans covered under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to reimburse vaccine administration without copays, coinsurance, or deductible. However, there is no legal requirement for ACA plans to cover out-of-network administration. Cost-sharing and reimbursement rates will vary by the issuer in those situations. There is no legal requirement under the CARES Act for non-ACA plans to cover vaccine administration. Federal law does not regulate how much commercial insurers will reimburse.

**Q:** What should our clinic do to prepare for the potential of an acute allergic reaction?
**A:** Refer to Interim Considerations: Preparing for the Potential Management of Anaphylaxis at COVID-19 Vaccination Sites for more information.

**Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine**

**Q:** What resources are available for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine?
**Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine Manufacturer Website** includes:
- Safety Information
- Fact sheet for Health Care Providers: replaces package insert
- Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers: replaces VIS sheet
- Dosing and Administration information
- FAQs

**CDC Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine** page includes:
- Training For Healthcare Professionals
- Administration Overview
- Storage and Handling Overview
- FAQs
Q: Can more than 5 doses of vaccine be administered from a vial?
A: CDC has provided interim guidance noting that given the public health emergency, it is acceptable to use every full dose obtainable from each vial. After dilution, vials of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine contain six doses of 0.3 mL of vaccine. Low dead-volume syringes and/or needles can be used to extract six doses from a single vial. If standard syringes and needles are used, there may not be sufficient volume to extract a sixth dose from a single vial. Irrespective of the type of syringe and needle

- Each dose must contain 0.3 mL of vaccine.
- If the amount of vaccine remaining in the vial cannot provide a full dose of 0.3 mL, discard the vial and any excess volume.
- Do not pool excess vaccine from multiple vials.

Moderna Vaccine

Q. What resources are available for the Moderna vaccine?
Moderna Vaccine Manufacturer Website includes:
- Safety information
- Fact Sheet for Healthcare Providers: replaces the Package Insert.
- Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers: replaces the VIS sheet.
- Dosing and Administration information
- FAQs

CDC Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine page includes:
- Training for Healthcare Professionals
- Administration Overview
- Storage and Handling Overview
- FAQs

Q: Can more than 10 doses of vaccine be administered from a vial?
A: CDC has provided interim guidance noting that given the public health emergency, it is acceptable to use every full dose obtainable from each vial. In some cases, providers may be able to obtain an 11th dose from a Moderna vaccine vial, and this may be used if it is truly a full dose. Whether an 11th dose is obtainable depends, in part, on the type of syringes and needles used to withdraw doses from the vials. Because the vaccine does not contain preservative, it is critical to note that if the amount of vaccine remaining in the vial cannot provide a full dose, discard the vial and content. Do not pool excess vaccine from multiple vials to create one dose.

COVID-19 Vaccine Temperature Requirements, Storage and Handling

Q: Can we take COVID-19 vaccine off-site and conduct clinics?
A: Yes, as long as you follow storage and handling guidelines for packing and managing COVID-19 vaccine and the Provider Agreement includes the location where vaccine will be administered.
Q: When will vaccine storage and handling educational resources be available?
A: A COVID-19 vaccine addendum to CDC's Vaccine Storage and Handling Toolkit is now available. CDC is also developing supplemental guidance for each vaccine, including vaccine storage, handling, and administration information. Vaccine manufacturers are also developing materials. All materials will be distributed when they become available.

Q: What are the storage and handling requirements for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine?
A: Refer to the CDC COVID-19 Pfizer Vaccine Resources and manufacturer information for the most up to date information.

Q: What are the storage and handling requirements for the Moderna Vaccine?
A: Refer to the CDC COVID-19 Moderna Vaccine Resources and manufacturer information for the most up to date information.

Q: Storage conditions for the COVID-19 vaccine seems really complicated. What is considered a temperature excursion?
A: Any period outside of recommended range is considered a temperature excursion. For recommended storage conditions to various COVID-19 vaccines, please refer to the CDC’s Clinical Resources for Each COVID-19 Vaccine.

Q: We are currently enrolled in the VCVP/VAVP program. Should we follow the same temperature excursion protocol for the COVID-19 vaccine as the other vaccines we manage?
A: Yes, temperature excursion protocol will remain the same.

Q: My organization uses a temperature monitoring system that was not provided from the state. How do we report temperature excursions?
A: Temperature excursions are reported to the Immunization Program by phone or email. A member of our team assisting with the temperature excursion will let you know what is needed from your monitoring system in order to resolve the issue.

Q: The COVID-19 vaccine was left on the counter. Should I throw it out?
A: Never assume the viability of a vaccine. Place in appropriate temperatures and contact the Immunization Program at AHS.VDHImmunizationProgram@vermont.gov.

Q: Can we store other materials in the unit with the COVID-19 vaccine?
A: Food may not be stored with any vaccine. Other medical materials may be stored with vaccine, but below the state supplied vaccine in the unit.

Ordering, receipt, and management of vaccine inventory

Q: How does my practice or facility order COVID-19 vaccine?
A: The Immunization Program will order the limited supply of COVID-19 vaccines on behalf of enrolled providers.

Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is distributed to providers either as a direct shipment from the manufacturer in multiples of 975 doses (195 five dose vials) or transferred from the Vermont Vaccine Depot to providers in smaller quantities. Moderna vaccine orders are shipped directly from
McKesson, their distributor, to providers in multiples of 100 doses (10 ten dose vials) or may be transferred from the Depot in smaller quantities.

Transferring vaccine from the Depot shortens the Beyond Use Date for Pfizer vaccine to 120 hours at refrigerator temperature. It cannot be transferred from one ultracold freezer to another. Moderna vaccine can be transferred from freezer to freezer, or when transferred from freezer to refrigerator, the Beyond Use Date is shortened to 30 days.

Separate orders are placed for first and second doses in matching quantities. Label the doses when they arrive as first or second. Pfizer second doses arrive two weeks after first doses, and Moderna doses arrive three weeks after first doses. Both arriving a week before the first possible date of administration.

Inventory management for COVID-19 vaccines utilizes the Vaccine Inventory Management System (VIMS). Vaccine will appear in your VIMS inventory after a transfer or order has been initiated by the Immunization Program. Providers are responsible for reporting bonus doses, waste, doses administered, and reconciling inventory weekly.

Q: I heard that the vaccine would arrive with additional materials. What can we expect?
A: When a COVID-19 vaccine order is placed, an ancillary kit will also be shipped with supplies required for administration. Ancillary supply kits will be sent separately from the vaccine at no cost to providers. Kits will include needles, syringes, alcohol prep pads, a COVID-19 vaccination record card for each vaccine recipient, and a minimal supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), including surgical masks and face shields. Ancillary supply kits will not include sharps containers, gloves, bandages, or other supplies.

Q: When will our ancillary kits arrive?
A: If vaccine is coming from the Vermont Vaccine Depot, then ancillary kits will come at the same time as the vaccine. If vaccine is being directly shipped to a facility, then the ancillary kits will arrive the day before or the day of the vaccine shipment. To request supplemental ancillaries for Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, contact AHS.VDHImmunizationProgram@vermont.gov. This is a temporary measure while the Pfizer-BioNTech “Mega” kits (with enough supplies for 6 doses/vial) are being brought online. “Mega” kits will be rolling out automatically with all Pfizer-BioNTech orders by mid-January 2021.

Q: What are the dimensions of the ancillary supply kits, number of kits in a shipping box, and dimensions of the shipping box?
A: The dimensions of the kit that will come with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are 24 in x 20 in x 24 in. This kit provides supplies needed to administer 975 doses of vaccine. The dimensions of the kit that will come with the Moderna vaccine are 14 in x 13 in x 9 in. This kit provides supplies needed to administer 100 doses of vaccine.

Q: How do I manage my COVID-19 vaccine inventory?
A: Vaccine will appear in your VIMS inventory after a transfer or the Immunization Program makes an order. All COVID-19 vaccination providers must report COVID-19 vaccine inventory weekly into VIMS. Adjustments for wastage or expiration should be entered by the facility the day they occur, prior to weekly reconciliation. If you do not have VIMS access, please contact the immunization
registry at IMR@Vermont.gov For more information please refer to the COVID-19 VIMS Hospital User Guide and VIMS Reconciliation Process Tutorial

Q: How do I report a problem with my delivery?
A: Please report any problems with a vaccine shipment, including missing product, damage, or receipt of an incorrect order on the same day as delivery to the Immunization Program. Email AHS.VDHImmunizationProgram@vermont.gov.

Q: We have been administering “bonus doses” (>5 for Pfizer-BioNTech, >10 for Moderna) out of the vial. How do we account for this is VIMS?
A: CDC has provided interim guidance noting that given the public health emergency, it is acceptable to use every full dose obtainable from each vial. When this happens, those doses must be adjusted into your VIMS inventory to be accounted for. Please refer to the VIMS Vaccine Adjustment Tutorial for more information.

Q: How do I make sure I have enough vaccine to provide second doses to recipients?
A: Second dose planning will initially occur through the CDC and will be planned into our allocation. Do not reserve second doses for your patients, you will receive enough vaccine for second doses in future shipments.

Q: Do we have to use the provided vaccination cards, or can we print the same information from our Electronic Medical Records (EMR)?
A: Giving out a vaccination card is strongly recommended but not required. The card is a second dose reminder tool. If the same information can be printed from an EMR, then that is an acceptable alternative.

Q: What do I do with an expired vaccine?
A: Vaccine waste (expired doses, un-used/timed out, temperature excursions, etc.) should be entered into VIMS the day they occur, before weekly reconciliation. To determine the expiration date of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, providers can scan the QR code located on the vial or carton or access the manufacturer’s website directly, enter the lot number, and the expiration date will be displayed.

The CDC developed a Vaccine Expiration Date Tracking Tool and Beyond Use Date Guidance specific to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. There is currently no vaccine return program, and providers are encouraged to dispose of vaccine waste according to local regulations.

Q: Do we have to report to CDC?
A: No vaccine provider needs to report directly to CDC. All reporting is handled through Vermont’s Immunization Registry and the Vaccine Inventory Reporting System (VIMS).

Q: What is VaccineFinder?
A: The VaccineFinder platform helps the public find providers who offer select vaccines in communities across the United States. The CDC is using VaccineFinder to help facilitate COVID-19 vaccine supply reporting, and as appropriate show the sites that are offering the vaccine. Our Immunization Program will be reporting daily supply information into VaccineFinder. Providers have the option to make their location visible on the VaccineFinder public facing website to increase the public’s access to the vaccine. www.vaccinefinder.org
Safety and Talking to Patients

Q: Where can I find safety information about COVID-19 vaccines?
A: The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. CDC’s site Ensuring the Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines in the United States discusses clinical trials, vaccine safety monitoring, expanded safety monitoring, existing safety monitoring, and more.

Q: What is v-safe?
A: V-safe is a smartphone-based tool that uses text messages and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after a person receives a COVID-19 vaccination. V-safe conducts electronic health check-ins with vaccine recipients via text messages and email. For more information or instructions to register go to the CDC V-safe site.

Providers who recommend V-safe to their patients need to give patients an enrollment sheet at the time of vaccination and should counsel patients on the importance of enrolling in v-safe.

Q: Will I still report adverse events to VAERS?
A: Yes. Health care providers are required by Vermont law to report any adverse events that happen after vaccination to VAERS. Anyone is able to make a VAERS report, including a patient or a guardian. All adverse events should be reported as soon as possible, and duplicate reporting is allowed. Please submit to VAERS even if you are unsure if a report should be filed. Report adverse events at https://www.vaers.hhs.gov.

Q: How can I talk with my patients about COVID-19 vaccines?
A: As a patient’s most trusted source of information about vaccines, you play a critical role in building confidence in COVID-19 vaccination. As you talk with patients, acknowledge the disruption COVID-19 has had on all our lives. This allows you to establish common concerns that can be addressed by vaccination. It’s understandable that patients will have questions, and CDC has many resources to help you start the conversation, make recommendations, and answer questions. See the CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Communication Toolkit for printable materials and guides. You can also print and share the Vermont Department of Health handout “Things You Should Know about COVID-19 Vaccines.” Translated versions will be posted to our About Vaccines page soon.

Q: We keep getting questions about where our patients will access the vaccine and how they will know. What should we tell them?
A: As locations and registration options become available, they will be announced through various media. You or your patients can also sign up for weekly updates from the Health Department. You may always refer your patients to the Health Department About COVID-19 Vaccines in Vermont for the most up to date information.

COVID-19 Vaccination for Vermont Health Care Workers

Q: What Health Care workers are in Phase 1A?
Refer to the Health Department’s Vaccine Information for Health Care Professionals page and About COVID-19 Vaccine in Vermont page for more information.
Q: I am a health care worker. How do I get my vaccine?
Health Department’s Vaccine Information for Health Care Professionals page.

**Acronyms and Definitions:**

VVP: Vermont Vaccine Program
ACIP: Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices
VCVP/VAVP: Vermont Child Vaccine Program/Vermont Adult Vaccine Program
CDC: Centers for Disease Control
mRNA: messenger RNA
VAERS: Vaccine Adverse Events Report System
BUD: Beyond Use Date
HCW: Health Care Worker
VIMS: Vaccine Inventory Management System
VIS: Vaccine Information Sheet