

Middlesex County COVID-19 Vaccine Update

For the most up-to-date COVID-19 information in Middlesex County including scheduling for vaccines and testing, case numbers, health information, helpful resources, and more, please visit www.middlesexcountynj.gov/covid19

People who cannot register online, or have more detailed questions, can be directed to our Call Center at 732-745-3100.

New Jersey has launched its statewide vaccine scheduling system, the [New Jersey Vaccine Scheduling System \(NJVSS\)](#), to help all potential vaccine recipients identify nearby vaccine distribution sites and schedule an appointment.

On Sunday January 31, the State sent out a notice through NJVSS that the second dose appointments originally scheduled to be sent by January 30, were delayed due to the impact of the nor'easter and the need to prioritize the rescheduling of appointments across the State. The State's notice indicated that for those who are waiting on NJVSS notification of the second appointment, those appointments will be sent out as soon as the extent of the storm's disruption of operations is fully known. The email notifications will include information on the date and time of the second appointment, and the appointment will be located at the same vaccination site as the individual's first dose.

The State has indicated that once this feature is turned on, all who reserve an appointment through NJVSS to visit a county site will receive an automated email for their second appointment

The State's toll-free vaccination hotline (855-568-0545) is available to assist callers with identifying if they are currently eligible for a vaccination, pre-register for the vaccine, and to help them identify locations nearest to them where they can get vaccinated. The hotline is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day and can help callers in more than 240 different languages. Call center staff only have the capability of registering and scheduling users in NJVSS.

If you experience an error or need support with the New Jersey Vaccine Scheduling System, you can complete an online form at www.covid19.nj.gov/vaccinehelp

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.

Middlesex County is looking for volunteers to assist with COVID-19 vaccination in medical and non-medical roles. For more information, please visit www.middlesexcountynj.gov/covid19

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout – Overview, Phasing, and Scheduling

- The State of New Jersey has begun to roll out COVID-19 vaccines in a [phased approach](#) to all adults who live, work, or are being educated in the State. 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.
 - Currently vaccines are available to the following groups;
 - Healthcare Personnel (Phase 1A)
 - Long-Term Care Residents and Staff (Phase 1A)
 - First Responders (Phase 1B)
 - Individuals 16-64 with certain medical conditions, [as defined by the CDC](#) (Phase 1B)

- Individuals ages 65 and older (Phase 1B)
- Future Phases will include:
 - Additional frontline essential workers (Phase 1B)
 - Other essential workers (Phase 1C)
 - General population (Phase 2)
- The list of those eligible to receive the vaccine [is being continuously updated](#).
 - *As per the State of New Jersey, please note: Vaccination phases are tentative and subject to change. The movement between vaccination eligibility phases may be fluid. One phase may overlap with another. Not all individuals in each phase will be vaccinated before opening to additional groups, and not all groups within a specific phase will be made eligible to receive the vaccine at the same time.*
- Vaccinations began on December 15, 2020 in New Jersey Hospitals for paid and unpaid persons serving in their health facilities.
- As of December 30, 2020 through the [Federal Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program](#) with CVS and Walgreens, New Jersey has administered first doses of the coronavirus vaccine at nearly 800 New Jersey nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Doses for these settings have already been reserved in the State's allocation. 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.

COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chain

- The State places direct orders with the Federal Government, and the State receives an amount at the discretion of the federal government, which is then subsequently subdivided and distributed by the State.
- Number of Doses Received by County: 10500
- Number of Doses Administered by County: 8030
- 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.
- Information about the number of doses administered in the State and demographic information can be found on the State [COVID Dashboard](#).

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout – Megasites and other vaccine distribution sites

- There are six state coordinated “Megsites” in New Jersey which will immediately be in position to vaccinate front-line healthcare workers and then continue vaccinations in accordance with the State Phasing, dependent upon the supply of vaccine to New Jersey.
- Middlesex County in partnership with the State of New Jersey and RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) is operating a COVID-19 vaccine mega-site in **Edison Township at the [New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center](#)** with the capacity to administer up to 2,400 vaccine doses per day to qualified individuals as per the [State's phasing plan](#).
 - The Middlesex County Megasite is open Monday through Friday from 8am-4pm and is located at 97 Sunfield Ave, Edison, NJ 08837.
 - **For a full list of vaccination sites in the County and [registration info for the Edison mega-site](#), please visit [HERE](#).**

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout – County Program

- Registration and reservation for all County sites will be taking place through the New Jersey Vaccine Scheduling System (NJVSS), a State system that facilitates registration and appointment reservations across New Jersey, which can be accessed through www.middlesexcountynj.gov/covid19 as well as through covidvaccine.nj.gov
 - This site enables you to register for the vaccine regardless of your phase; the NJVSS will then notify you when your phase has been approved to begin receiving the vaccine and appointments are available. The system also handles the scheduling, notification, and reminders for the booster shot needed for both Moderna and Pfizer vaccines.
 - Please note, due to the limited number of vaccines available each day, appointments are scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis and are not rebooked for cancellations or no shows.
 - Registrants of the vaccine will not have the option to select the vaccine-maker of their choice, vaccines are strictly predicated on supply provided by the federal government.
- As additional vaccine is received, the County will continue with our vaccination campaign for eligible persons on a predetermined schedule across the following locations which can be viewed through the NJVSS:
 - The Heldrich Hotel and Conference Center, 10 Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
 - Monroe Township Senior Center, 12 Halsey Reed Road, Monroe Township, NJ 08831
 - East Brunswick Community Arts Center, 721 Cranbury Road, East Brunswick, NJ 08816
 - Middlesex County Office of Health Services, 1 Ericsson Drive, Piscataway, NJ 08854
 - Middlesex County Fire Academy, 1001 Fire Academy Dr, Sayreville, NJ 08872
 - Middlesex County Vocational and Technical School – Perth Amboy Campus, 457 High St, Perth Amboy, NJ 08861
 - *Please encourage your constituents not to call these locations directly, but to call 732-745-3100 with questions or visit www.middlesexcountynj.gov/covid19*
- All County Sites will adhere to the State Phasing system and augment the existing State and Federal distribution methods described above. **All County operated sites are limited to Middlesex County residents.**
- To schedule an appointment at one of Middlesex County’s six additional sites, please visit: www.middlesexcountynj.gov/covid19 or the [New Jersey Vaccine Scheduling System \(NJVSS\)](#),

COVID-19 Vaccine Background Information

- COVID-19 vaccines help our bodies develop immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19 without us having to get the illness. Different types of vaccines work in different ways to offer protection.
- Both the [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) and [Moderna](#) vaccines are messenger [RNA vaccines \(mRNA\)](#), which **when injected instruct our cells how to make a protein—or even just a piece of a protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies.** That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.
- COVID-19 vaccines that are authorized for use have gone through clinical trials involving tens of thousands of participants to determine their [safety and efficacy](#). Clinical trials of all vaccines must first show they are safe and effective before any vaccine can be authorized or approved for use, including COVID-19 vaccines. **The known and potential benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine must outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine for use under what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).**

- Getting COVID-19 may offer some natural protection, known as immunity. Current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. However, experts don't know for sure how long this protection lasts, and the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity. [COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you](#) by creating an antibody (immune system) response without having to experience sickness.
- Both vaccines are given as an injection into the muscle and as a series of two shots. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is two doses given 21 days apart and the Moderna vaccine is two doses given 28 days apart.
- COVID-19 vaccines will not give you COVID-19. **None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development use the live virus that causes COVID-19.**
- **COVID-19 vaccines will not cause you to test positive on COVID-19 viral tests.** Vaccines won't cause you to test positive on viral tests, which are used to see if you have a current infection.
- [After receiving an injection](#) of a COVID-19 vaccine, you will be observed for 15 minutes by healthcare staff to monitor any side effects. Observation may be longer (30 minutes) if you have a history of anaphylaxis.
 - Like many vaccines, a COVID-19 vaccine may cause some temporary discomfort. In addition to a sore arm, side effects of the vaccines may include tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, fever, injection site swelling, injection site redness, nausea, feeling unwell, and swollen lymph nodes.
- 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.
- Wearing masks and social distancing help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others, **but these measures are not enough**. Vaccines will work with your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others, stay at least 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds, and wash your hands often. **The combination of getting vaccinated and following CDC's recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.**