



Bulletin: Updates on Maryland’s COVID-19 Vaccine Plan
To: All COVID-19 Vaccine Providers Registered in ImmuNet, including but not limited to Hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), and Local Health Departments
From: Webster Ye, Assistant Secretary, Maryland Department of Health (MDH)
Date: **October 22, 2021**

- Please review the latest [Vaccination Matters Order \(09/08/2021\)](#) and [Nursing Home Matters Order \(09/08/2021\)](#). We encourage every provider to make use of every resource to ensure a successful vaccination campaign.
- **All COVID-19 vaccine providers are required to administer COVID-19 vaccine according to the following updated guidance.**
- **This document updates and supersedes the past COVID-19 vaccine bulletin, dated September 24, 2021, and earlier bulletins. This bulletin will be updated as needed going forward.**

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Updates & Reminders | October 22, 2021

- **UPDATES:**

- On [October 21, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention \(CDC\)](#) updated its recommendations for certain individuals who completed a primary series of any COVID-19 vaccine, recommending a one booster dose after either six (6) months from primary series of Pfizer or Moderna or two (2) months from dose of Janssen (J&J).

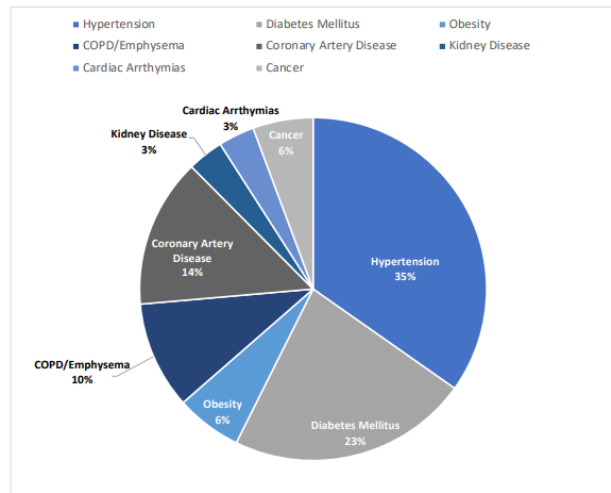
Individuals may self-attest to eligibility. Providers **shall not** turn away any individual who self-attests to eligibility for a booster or additional dose (for immunocompromised). Please see Section 1, Vaccine Eligibility for more information.

- **REMINDERS:**

- **It is important for providers, including retail pharmacies, not to miss any opportunity to vaccinate every eligible person who presents at vaccine clinics.**

Please note: It is especially important for providers to reach out to individuals or patients in their networks who have comorbidities to ensure that they receive either an additional dose or booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccine as well as those that may remain unvaccinated. Preliminary Maryland data shows that those with comorbidities are at increased risk of death from COVID-19.

September 20th to October 20th 2021



- **Marylanders who are still unvaccinated remain at the greatest risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19 and highly contagious variants, hospitalization, and death.** We strongly urge Marylanders who are unvaccinated to get vaccinated.
- All COVID-19 vaccine providers shall continue to prioritize Marylanders who are 65 and older.
- [COVID-19 Vaccine and the Flu Shot can be administered at the same time.](#) All COVID-19 vaccine providers are encouraged to promote the flu shot.

1. Vaccine Eligibility (Updated October 22, 2021)

- All Marylanders 12 and older are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. All COVID-19 vaccine providers shall continue to prioritize Marylanders who are 65 and older.

Please note: Those aged 12 to 17 are **only eligible to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech (COMIRNATY) COVID-19 vaccine** based on the amended Emergency Use Authorization to expand its use in adolescents 12 to 15 years of age. Please see the [FDA](#) and [CDC](#) statements for more information.

MDH strongly supports use of the Pfizer-BioNTech (COMIRNATY) COVID-19 vaccine in adolescents 12 to 17 years of age, and encourages providers to make appointments available to this population immediately. **Providers should develop their own procedures for handling parental consent of these populations.**

- **Booster Dose:**

For those individuals that received a primary series of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, all Providers shall offer a booster dose of any FDA approved or authorized COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after the primary series to the following individuals:

- People 65 years and older
- Age 18+ who live in [long-term care settings](#),
- Age 18+ who have [underlying medical conditions](#),
- Age 18+ who work or live in [high-risk settings](#).

Please note that the dosage for the Moderna booster dose is smaller than the doses in the Moderna primary series. Providers should see manufacturer's administration guidance for more details.

For those individuals that received a primary series of Janssen (J&J) vaccine, all Providers shall offer a booster dose of any FDA approved or authorized COVID-19 vaccine at least 2 months after the primary dose to any individual 18 years and older.

Patients should talk to their healthcare providers to determine individual benefits and risks of receiving a booster dose.

- **Additional Dose:**

All Providers shall offer an additional dose of COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech/Moderna) to individuals in light of the following considerations:

The CDC approved the FDA amendment of the emergency use authorizations for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines to allow specific individuals with compromised immune systems to receive a third additional vaccine dose.

Patients should talk to their healthcare providers to determine if they need an additional dose and what the timing of that dose should be. As required by the MDH [Nursing Home Matters](#) and [Vaccination Matters Orders](#), those that reside in Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Programs, Developmental Disabilities Group Homes, and Residential Drug Treatment Centers shall be offered the opportunity for an additional dose.

- **Self-Attestation:**

Any Marylander who presents to a provider that they are eligible for an additional dose or a booster dose shall be allowed to self-attest that eligibility. Providers shall follow [CDC guidelines](#) when developing their own procedures to allow for self-attestation of patient eligibility.

However, providers shall not turn away any individual who self-attests to eligibility for an additional dose or booster dose. Failure of an individual to “show proof” of eligibility shall not be a reason that a provider does not administer an additional or booster dose.

Providers should continue to report any doses they administer in the same manner that they report first and second doses to ensure that vaccine records are reported into ImmuNet within 24 hours of administration. ImmuNet is able to track third dose vaccine administrations.

2. **Residency and Priority Group Eligibility Determinations**

- **A COVID-19 vaccine provider may not refuse an individual a vaccine based on their citizenship or immigration status.**
- **Non-discrimination:** MDH complies with applicable Federal and State civil rights laws and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion or creed, sex, age, ancestry or national origin, marital status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, genetic information, socioeconomic status, and/or any other protected status. The Maryland Department of Health prohibits the exclusion and favorable/unfavorable treatment of any individual in the aforementioned protected categories based on an individual's medical knowledge of

and/or experience with a vaccine's efficacy, longevity, reduced side effects, or any other characteristic associated with the performance of an administered COVID-19 vaccination. **An individual's protected status shall have no bearing on the type of vaccine an individual receives.**

3. Vaccine Operations

- All COVID-19 vaccine providers shall submit their orders for COVID-19 vaccine directly through ImmuNet each Thursday between 8am and 4pm. Please review this [document](#) for instructions on how to place a COVID-19 vaccine order in ImmuNet.

Please contact mdh.covidvax@maryland.gov if you have any questions.

Providers can check the status of their COVID-19 order in ImmuNet. Please see [this guide](#) for information on how to check your ImmuNet COVID-19 vaccine order.

- All COVID-19 Vaccine Providers shall: Register in ImmuNet to order vaccine at <https://www.mdimmunet.org/> Please refer to this [guide](#) for instructions on how to register.
- **Pfizer-BioNTech (COMIRNATY):** Per updated [federal guidance](#), all vials of Pfizer-BioNTech (COMIRNATY) contain 6 vaccine doses. Providers that are unable to get a sixth dose from each vial will need to report the sixth dose as wastage using the process outlined in Section 4, Wastage. Additional Pfizer-BioNTech (COMIRNATY) details can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/pfizer/index.html>

Per the FDA, the shelf life of properly stored (between -90°C to -60°C (-130°F to -76°F)) cartons and vials of the Pfizer-BioNTech (COMIRNATY) COVID-19 vaccine with an expiration date of August 2021 through February 2022 printed on the label may remain in use for three months beyond the printed date as long as authorized storage conditions have been maintained. This does **not apply** to vials dated July 2021 or earlier.

Note: Frozen vials stored at -25°C to -15°C and refrigerated vials (2°C to 8°C) are **NOT** eligible for extension.

- **Moderna:** Per updated federal guidance, Moderna will only ship vials containing the larger 15 vaccine doses (but are indicated as 14 dose vials). Providers should note the vial size of the vials they have in their inventory before administering doses. Requests will be filled in installments of 140. Additional Moderna details can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/moderna/index.html>
- **Expiration:** Providers should visit the manufacturer's website to check the expiration dates of any vaccine in their inventory. Please check your inventory to confirm expiration dates. Once expired, please report the doses expired on this [form](#) and dispose of the expired

vaccine with your medical waste (eg. red sharps container). Do not dispose of the expired vaccine in your normal trash.

- **All hospital providers** shall, subject to the availability of vaccine supply, offer COVID-19 vaccine to any eligible inpatients being discharged from a hospital admission to a nursing home, assisted living program, or other post-acute care facility (such as a rehabilitation center).

4. **CovidVax.Maryland.gov**

- “All providers **who administer vaccines to the general public** shall submit their vaccination site details (vaccine appointment registration webpage and a phone number that directs callers to staff accepting appointment registrations) to wesley.huntemann@maryland.gov.”
- All registered COVID-19 vaccine providers in ImmuNet that are offering vaccination clinics will be listed on this page.

5. **Wastage/At-risk Vaccines**

- To avoid missed vaccine administration opportunities, vaccine providers may follow the CDC updated wastage policy, found below in Appendix 1, with the understanding that the emphasis on reducing vaccine wastage by providers remains. Please continue to follow best practices to use every dose possible while minimizing the expense of missing an opportunity to vaccinate every eligible person when they are ready to get vaccinated.
 - For further guidance, please refer to the current [Vaccination Matters Order](#) (amended 09/08/2021) and/or [Provider Guidance for Avoiding Waste of COVID-19 Vaccine Doses](#) documents (subject to update).
- Providers should report all COVID-19 vaccine wastage and vaccine storage unit temperature excursions to: <https://www.marylandvfc.org/covid-19-vaccine-excursion-expiration-reporting-form/>.

NOTE: For providers that have received Pfizer-BioNTech (COMIRNATY): If a provider is unable to access a sixth dose, the sixth dose must be reported as wastage as “other”.

Please review the guidelines before disposing of any COVID-19 vaccine doses.

6. **Provider to Provider Transfers**

- Providers can contact mdh.covidvax@maryland.gov at any time to initiate a provider to provider transfer. MDH will facilitate the transfer by providing contact information for

community providers to initiate a transfer. A provider to provider transfer can be for a smaller amount of doses than currently available through direct ordering via ImmuNet.

- A provider who has been allocated doses from Maryland may transfer doses to another approved COVID-19 vaccine provider. The receiving vaccine provider must have completed the CDC provider agreement and the CDC redistribution agreement.
- Providers **must** keep records of what doses have been transferred and **must** complete a transfer request here at:
<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/52e75f3d4514499cb0fd7110bd4000a7>
 - The form will ask to/from, date, type (1st or 2nd) and amount.
- Both the transferring provider and the receiving provider are responsible for ensuring that their part of the transfer is executed correctly, i.e. transfer paperwork, chain of custody, storage and handling.
- Receiving providers must have the proper reporting mechanism in place and are responsible for reporting the vaccinations to ImmuNet.

Further information will be provided as it becomes available. If you have any questions, please contact mdh.covidvax@maryland.gov.

Appendix 1: CDC Statement on Wastage (as of May 11, 2021)

Take every opportunity to vaccinate every eligible person

- Over a hundred million people are fully vaccinated in the United States, and many more have received at least one COVID-19 vaccination.
- Our goal is to increase vaccine confidence and for everyone who wants to be vaccinated to have every opportunity to be fully vaccinated once they become eligible.
- CDC and our partners are doing everything possible to minimize the amount of vaccine that goes unused.
- Vaccine wastage may increase as the vaccine rollout continues because:
 - more providers, including smaller provider sites, are now receiving vaccine,
 - vial sizes for some vaccines have increased,
 - vaccine vials may be opened without every dose being used
- To ensure providers do not miss an opportunity to vaccinate every eligible person, CDC recommends:
 - Providers follow [clinical best practice for vaccination as well as best practices when managing inventory](#) to maximize vaccination and minimize dose wastage.
 - Providers should not miss any opportunities to vaccinate every eligible person who presents at a vaccination site, even if it means puncturing a multidose vial to administer vaccine without having enough people available to receive each dose.
 - Consider establishing and promoting standing vaccination days or half-days to increase likelihood of larger numbers of people presenting for vaccination on the same day.
 - Vaccinate family members or friends who accompany patients to medical visits even if they are not established patients at the vaccinating practice
 - Continue outreach to employers or other community partners that have a large membership or network to arrange vaccination events.
 - As a contingency plan, vaccine providers should attempt to contact additional persons (i.e., from a waitlist or through personal contacts of persons being vaccinated) to use as many vaccine doses as possible.
 - Once punctured, multidose vials must be used within:
 - 12 hours (Moderna)
 - 6 hours (Pfizer-BioNTech (COMIRNATY))
 - 2 hours (J&J/Janssen)
 - The more Americans who get vaccinated the fewer COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, outbreaks, and deaths that will occur.
- CDC remains committed to helping jurisdictions and sites manage inventory and creating additional strategies to minimize vaccine wastage, including increased use of walk-in clinics.