



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc
Commissioner

February 4, 2021

Dear Colleague,

People aged 65 years and older are eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination in New York State. Because the risk of severe COVID-19 among adults increases with age and is compounded by the presence of underlying medical conditions that are more common among older adults, it is critical that people aged 65 years and older get vaccinated.

We are writing to ask you—as partners and trusted ambassadors—to inform your patients who are 65 years and older that they are now eligible for vaccination and make a strong recommendation that they be vaccinated. As vaccine supply remains limited, consider prioritizing proactive outreach to patients who are at greatest risk for severe illness, focusing first on older patients who have one or more medical conditions that increases their risk for severe COVID-19 illness.

A provider’s recommendation is one of the strongest predictors that a patient will get vaccinated.

Consider making COVID-19 vaccine discussions a routine part of patient visits. Some patients may be hesitant to get vaccinated. Take time to understand their concerns and answer their questions so that they feel confident and prepared to make informed decisions about vaccination. Offer information on how and where to get vaccinated. Remind them to take precautions to minimize their risk of exposure to COVID-19 when travelling to and while at vaccination sites. Explain the importance of wearing a face covering and practicing physical distancing and other COVID-19 prevention measures even after being vaccinated.

We encourage you to share the NYC Health Department fact sheet [COVID-19 Vaccine: What Older New Yorkers Need to Know](#). The factsheet can be printed from our main COVID-19 vaccine webpage at nyc.gov/covidvaccine and is available in multiple languages. If you would like to order copies for your practice, you can do so by calling **311**. We have also included a letter template at the end to assist you with conducting outreach to your patients who are 65 and older. We encourage you to modify this template for your practice, including adding any information you feel is important to your unique patient population.

Where your patients can get vaccinated

If you practice at facilities that offer on-site vaccination to patients, encourage patients to use those sites, particularly patients who can be vaccinated at the time of an in-person medical visit scheduled for a different reason.

If you or your health care system is currently not offering vaccinations to patients, please direct your eligible patients to the City’s nyc.gov/vaccinefinder website. Your patients can get vaccinated at many sites throughout the city. They can also call 977-VAX-4NYC (977-829-4692) for assistance making an appointment at NYC Health Department and Health + Hospitals vaccination sites; assistance is available in over 100 languages. The City is also offering free transportation to and from these City-run vaccination sites for people aged 65 years and older who require assistance. Information on arranging transportation will be provided when making a vaccination appointment. Please inform your patients that, as vaccine supply remains quite limited, it may take several weeks to get an appointment.

City-run vaccination sites are taking precautions to create a safe space for vaccination, including requiring appointments to reduce the number of people on site at any given time. Additional precautions include creating physical distance in waiting areas and screening all incoming staff and patients for current illness. Patients and staff must wear a face covering or mask at all times. Staff will wear personal protective equipment recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to protect themselves and patients.

Everyone being vaccinated must complete the New York State COVID-19 Vaccine Form. They can visit vaccineform.health.ny.gov on a computer or smartphone to complete the form. If they are unable to complete the form in advance, the vaccinating provider can help them do so when they arrive at the vaccination site. Please inform patients they will need to show proof of age and New York residency.

Note that home care workers and aides are also eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination. They will need to make an appointment in advance, complete the New York State COVID-19 Vaccine Form, and bring proof of employment in New York, such as an employee ID card, letter from their employer, or recent pay stub.

The NYC Health Department will continue to share information as it becomes available. Please check these links frequently for updates:

- Vaccination sites: nyc.gov/vaccinefinder
- Vaccination eligibility: nyc.gov/covidvaccinedistribution
- COVID-19 vaccine information for the public: nyc.gov/covidvaccine
- COVID-19 vaccine information for providers: nyc.gov/health/covidvaccineprovider

Thank you for your partnership throughout the City's COVID-19 vaccine campaign.

Sincerely,



Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc
Commissioner
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

[DATE], 2021

Dear [patient's name]:

I am writing to let you know that based on your age, you are now eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination in New York State. As your health care provider, I recommend that you be vaccinated.

Getting vaccinated is one of the most important steps you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19. People who are 65 or older are at much greater risk of becoming very sick if they get COVID-19. This risk is greater for people with certain medical conditions such as obesity, cancer, heart conditions, type 2 diabetes, and chronic kidney disease.

The COVID-19 vaccine is being provided at no cost for everyone. If you have insurance, it may be billed, but you will not be charged a co-payment or other fee. You do not need to share your immigration status to be vaccinated and getting vaccinated is not a public benefit under the public charge rule.

On a personal note, I **[have received vaccination against COVID-19/plan to be vaccinated as soon as possible]**. I hope you will do the same. I would not make this recommendation if I did not believe it was safe to do so. I have confidence in the COVID-19 vaccines because they went through large clinical studies that showed the vaccines are very safe and effective including for older adults.

You may have questions about COVID-19 vaccines. I have included answers to some common questions below. The NYC Health Department fact sheet [COVID-19 Vaccines: What Older New Yorkers Need to Know](#) provides helpful information about getting vaccinated. You can find it in many languages at nyc.gov/covidvaccine.

I encourage you to contact **[me/my office]** with any questions **[by calling XXX-XXX-XXXX/emailing xyz@abc/via our patient portal at xxx]**. You can also visit the NYC Health Department's website at nyc.gov/covidvaccine and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website at cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19 for additional information. It is important to get information about COVID-19 vaccines from these and other trusted sources.

[To schedule an appointment to get vaccinated, ask to be vaccinated at one of your upcoming medical appointments/call our office at XXX-XXX-XXXX/visit our patient portal at X.]

[To schedule an appointment to get vaccinated, visit the NYC vaccine locator website at nyc.gov/vaccinefinder to find a vaccination site near you. If you need assistance making an appointment at NYC Health Department and Health + Hospitals vaccination sites, call 977-VAX-4NYC (977-829-4692); assistance is available in over 100 languages. Currently the supply of vaccine is very limited, so it may take several weeks to get an appointment. Free transportation is available to and from these City-run vaccination sites for people 65 and older who need it. Assistance in arranging transportation will be provided when making your vaccination appointment.]

There is a limited supply of vaccine, so if there are no appointments available, please check back regularly. Please note that you will be required to show proof of age and New York residence at the time of your appointment.

Finally, I want to remind you to please continue to follow COVID-19 prevention measures. There are many cases of COVID-19 in New York City. You should stay home as much as possible. If you leave home, avoid

crowded places, wear a face covering at all times, keep at least 6 feet from others, and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer often. Taking these steps will help protect you from getting exposed to COVID-19, including when going to your vaccination appointment.

[Insert information about telemedicine offerings for non-vaccine related visits, if available.]

Sincerely,

[Name and signature]

Which COVID-19 vaccines are available now?

The two vaccines that are currently available are the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines. Both are given by an injection into the upper arm. Both require two doses three or four weeks apart (depending on which vaccine you get).

How well do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

In clinical studies, both vaccines were shown to be more than 94% effective at protecting participants from COVID-19, including in older adults.

Why should I get vaccinated?

When you get vaccinated, you are helping to protect yourself and may be protecting others.

Can I get COVID-19 from the COVID-19 vaccines?

No. The COVID-19 vaccines do not contain the virus.

Do the COVID-19 vaccines have side effects?

Most people experience some side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Common side effects include pain or swelling where the shot was given, tiredness, headache, body aches, and fever. These are usually signs that the body is building protection.

What steps are being taken to make sure vaccination sites are safe?

Vaccination sites are taking the following precautions to ensure the safety of others, including:

- Maintaining physical distance in waiting areas.
- Screening all incoming staff and patients for COVID-19 symptoms. Reschedule your appointment if you are not feeling well on the day of your appointment.
- Both patients and staff **must wear a face covering at all times**. You will not be allowed into the site without one.
- Appointments are required to reduce the number of people on site at any given time.