



February 19, 2021 (Updated March 25, 2021)

New Yorkers with HIV Are Now Eligible to Receive a COVID-19 Vaccine

Dear Colleague,

All people with HIV who live in New York State (NYS) are now eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. For a list of groups currently eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in NYS, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccinedistribution.

Encourage patients with HIV to get vaccinated against COVID-19. People with HIV are [a priority](#) for vaccination, as many have comorbidities that increase risk of severe COVID-19 and face socioeconomic conditions that may increase risk of exposure. A provider's recommendation is one of the [strongest predictors](#) of a patient receiving a vaccine. Reach out to patients with HIV and help them get access to COVID-19 vaccine.

Help eligible patients get vaccinated against COVID-19. If your facility has received vaccine, offer vaccination to eligible patients. Assist patients to navigate New York City's vaccine appointment system. New Yorkers can find a vaccination site and make an appointment at vaccinefinder.nyc.gov. If they need assistance making an appointment at a City-run site, they can call 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692). If they are unable to get an appointment, encourage patients to check regularly as new appointments will be added.

Patients need to bring proof they are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. If they are eligible because they have HIV and are being vaccinated by their health care provider, their medical records can serve as proof of eligibility. Otherwise, when scheduling an appointment, patients will need to complete a [certification](#) confirming they have an underlying health condition that makes them eligible for vaccination. They do not need to state which health condition or provide any other evidence to demonstrate which condition they have. Depending on the vaccination site, patients may also need to show proof of residency in NYS, New York City or a specific borough or ZIP code. For more information on proof of eligibility, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccine.

HIV care providers do not need to clear their patients to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Currently, the [Moderna](#), [Pfizer-BioNTech](#), and [Johnson & Johnson/Janssen](#) vaccines are only [contraindicated](#) in patients with a history of allergic reaction to the vaccine or one of its components (including polyethylene glycol or polysorbate). Clinical trials established the general safety and efficacy of these vaccines, but only the Moderna trial included people with HIV. Following [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) guidance, inform patients that we

little data on vaccine safety or effectiveness specific to people with HIV and people who are immunocompromised. Counsel immunocompromised people (including people with HIV with low CD4 counts) that because we do not know whether the vaccine will work as well for them, they should be especially cautious to avoid potential exposure to COVID-19, even after vaccination.

Continue to engage patients in HIV care and other necessary health care.

Immunocompromised people may be at increased risk of severe COVID-19. While New Yorkers should limit activities outside the home, no one should forgo regular HIV care or other necessary care. Make sure patients with HIV are screened for viral load and CD4 count at least every six months and have regular opportunities to discuss any barriers to care. HIV care clinics can provide some care through [telehealth](#) or video chat. See guidance for providers of HIV services during COVID-19 from the [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#) and the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#).

Ensure equal access to care. HIV and COVID-19 disproportionately affect communities of color. In New York City, [86%](#) of people with HIV diagnosed with COVID-19 are Black or Latino, and these groups have greater mortality associated with [HIV](#) and with [COVID-19](#). Furthermore, Black and Latino New Yorkers are [less likely](#) to have received a COVID-19 vaccine. Counsel patients with HIV, particularly those who are Black or Latino, that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and provide critical protection for their health.

For more information on COVID-19, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus. Select “Information for Providers” for Dear Colleague updates, health alerts and advisories, webinars and other resources.

Sincerely,



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