
March 23, 2021

The following information is provided to help partners communicate accurate and timely information to constituents. This information is subject to change as Virginia continues to refine the vaccination effort. Visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine for more information.

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What's New This Week

The [Vaccine Summary Dashboard](#) continues to show Virginia's significant progress in vaccinations, with nearly **3.2 million doses administered**. More than **96% of available first doses have been administered**. Approximately **1 in 3 adults** in Virginia have received at least one dose, and nearly **1 in 5 adults** are fully vaccinated.

Governor Northam has further [amended Executive Order 72](#) to modify public health restrictions in place to prevent transmission of COVID-19. These changes come as Virginia's vaccination rate is steady and case counts are fluctuating. **Effective April 1, limits on social gatherings will increase from 10 to 50 for indoor gatherings, and from 25 to 100 for outdoor gatherings.** Limits for entertainment and public amusement venues will remain at 30% occupancy, but the cap for indoor venues will increase from 250 to 500 persons, and the cap for outdoor gatherings will be removed. The number of spectators allowed at recreational sporting events will increase from 25 to 100 indoors, and from 250 to 500 outdoors, and remain limited at 30% capacity. Graduations and commencements will be limited to 500 persons indoors and 5,000 persons outdoors, as previously announced. [Amended guidelines](#) for business sectors are also available.

Key Overview Points

Virginia is administering vaccines from Johnson & Johnson, Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech. **All three vaccines are safe and virtually eliminate the risk of hospitalization or death from COVID-19.** While there are a variety of differences between the three vaccines, the most important is that Johnson & Johnson only requires one dose rather than the two doses required by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech. Vaccine brands are assigned to clinics based on logistics needs such as shipping quantities and storage temperatures, and not based on demographics or geography. A comparison fact sheet is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

There are still simply not enough doses available yet for everyone who is eligible to receive them. Virginia will not meet the demand for Phase 1b until April. **Unfortunately, it may still be weeks before vaccination appointments become available for those who have pre-registered.**

The doses Virginia receives from the federal government are **allocated by the Virginia Department of Health to local health districts**, primarily in proportion to each district's population. Local health districts are expected to determine the most equitable and efficient use of each allocation, leveraging any combination of their own staff and volunteers, hospitals, pharmacies, and individual providers. Additional doses help support targeted equity initiatives. Other doses reach some residents of Virginia through separate federal allocations to certain retail pharmacies; employees of the U.S. Department of Defense and certain other agencies; the Indian Health Service; and a federal contract to vaccinate residents of long-term care facilities.

While local health districts are allowed flexibility in how doses are administered to eligible individuals, **roughly half of the available supply should be used for people aged 65 or older**. The other half should be used for frontline essential workers, people with high-risk medical conditions as [identified by the CDC](#); and people in correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and migrant labor camps. Frontline essential workers should be prioritized in the order listed in the [Phase 1b details](#). When a local health district has moved to Phase 1c, other essential workers should be prioritized in the order listed in the [Phase 1c details](#).

Anyone who receives the first dose of vaccine will receive the second dose three or four weeks later as appropriate. Vaccine providers should not hold back their current first dose supply for second doses; they will receive second doses in proportion to the first doses they administer.

Each essential worker in Virginia should pre-register at vaccinate.virginia.gov or 877-VAX-IN-VA. To protect employee health information and promote equity among employees of many types of businesses and organizations, **employees are no longer being pre-registered through employers.** Employers are still encouraged to raise awareness among employees of the importance of getting vaccinated and how to pre-register, and to work with local health districts when it would make sense to hold on-site clinics for employees who are already pre-registered and eligible.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued [guidance](#) on March 8 about **what people can do when they are fully vaccinated** (which occurs two weeks after their final vaccine dose). The guidance notes that because public health researchers are still learning how vaccines will affect the spread of COVID-19, even people who are fully vaccinated should keep taking precautions in public places like wearing masks, staying 6 feet apart from others, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces. [Executive Order 72](#) maintains limits on social gatherings; the requirement to wear masks in public places; guidelines for businesses; and other provisions.

More than **300 retail pharmacy locations** in Virginia are [expanding](#) to provide vaccination appointments to anyone eligible in [Phase 1b](#), which includes people age 65 and older, people with high-risk medical conditions, and frontline essential workers. These appointments were previously only available based on age. Individuals interested in getting vaccinated at a local pharmacy may visit VaccineFinder.org to find eligible pharmacy locations, hours, phone numbers, and scheduling links where available. While many pharmacies have continued to work directly with local health districts to vaccinate vulnerable populations, some pharmacies have online scheduling for vaccine appointments.

The Virginia Department of Health [announced](#) that some local health districts

are **beginning to transition to [Phase 1c](#)**. The decision to move from one phase to the next is made in coordination with local and state health officials and is dependent upon a variety of factors. Before moving to 1c, local health departments must have made strong efforts to reach all those eligible in 1a and 1b populations -- particularly communities that have been disproportionately impacted, such as communities of color -- and must have determined that demand has decreased among 1a and 1b populations. **Everyone who lives or works in Virginia should continue to pre-register** by visiting vaccinate.virginia.gov or by calling 877-VAX-IN-VA (877-829-4682) from 8 a.m.-8p.m., seven days a week.

Community Vaccination Centers (CVCs) have [opened](#) in the Chesterfield/Petersburg, Danville, Portsmouth, and Prince William areas. These high-volume vaccination clinics are organized by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and Virginia Department of Health in collaboration with local health districts; funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and operated by a turnkey contractor. Like local clinics, **CVCs are by appointment only**, with invitations sent to eligible individuals on the statewide pre-registration list. CVC locations were selected based on an equity analysis to determine the communities with the most vulnerable populations and the greatest impact from COVID-19. Additional CVCs will open across Virginia in the coming weeks.

Everyone should verify and update their pre-registration records now by visiting vaccinate.virginia.gov or calling 877-VAX-IN-VA, because the form includes additional questions that were not available on previous forms. **If a record is missing important information, vaccination appointments may be delayed. People who have already been vaccinated should still update their records**, because it will help match them to the immunization database to prevent them from receiving weekly reminders. Verifying information and updating records will not change pre-registration dates or reference codes. The statewide vaccine pre-registration system has received more than 12 million views and more than 1.3 million pre-registrations since its launch on February 15. A [public information toolkit](#) is available to assist local health districts, localities, and community partners with graphics, talking points, frequently asked questions, and other materials.

The central Vaccinate Virginia phone number, **877-VAX-IN-VA** (877-829-4682), has received more than **421,000 inbound calls** so far and placed more than **413,000 outbound calls** to schedule appointments from the state pre-registration list at retail pharmacies and Community Vaccination Centers. The number is available seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Service is available immediately in **English and Spanish**, with real-time interpreter services available in any of more than 100 languages as needed.

How Localities Can Help

Support local health departments by ensuring that pre-registration options through vaccinate.virginia.gov and 877-VAX-IN-VA are promoted through local websites and other channels.

Emphasize to the public that because approximately 50% of Virginia residents are now eligible to be vaccinated, the limited supply of vaccine from the federal government means **it will take weeks to complete Phase 1b statewide**.

Closely coordinate with local health districts. Pooling venues, staff, volunteers, and other resources now will avoid delays later.

Remind everyone in the community that **it is more important than ever to take the same precautions as always**: staying home when possible, wearing masks when out, maintaining physical distance from others, washing hands frequently, and other best practices.

Remind everyone to **always look for websites that end with “.gov” to make sure the information is official**. When a vaccine appointment becomes available through a local health district, there will be no charge. State and local agencies will never call, email or text to ask someone for a social security number or immigration status in connection with vaccination.

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