



## ***NJAMHAA Newswire***

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### **The Latest Information about the COVID-19 Vaccine: COVID-19 Vaccine to Be Available for Everyone over the Age of 65 and to Those with High-Risk Conditions**

On Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, Governor Phil Murphy announced that the COVID-19 vaccine will be made available to everyone who is over the age of 65 and any adults who have underlying conditions to comply with new guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). On Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, the CDC updated its vaccination guidelines to speed up the vaccination process. Underlying conditions include cancer, chronic kidney disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (also known as COPD), Down Syndrome, heart conditions, obesity and severe obesity, sickle cell disease, smoking, and type 2 diabetes mellitus. Individuals who are pregnant and those in an immunocompromised state are encouraged to follow CDC guidance and should discuss receiving the COVID-19 vaccine with their medical providers. For information about what constitutes high-risk conditions, click [here](#) for more information from the CDC. Governor Murphy urges those who want to get the vaccine to sign up for appointments on the state website, which can be accessed [here](#). Click [here](#) to read a press release from the Office of the Governor.

An article in the *Star-Ledger* (January 11, 2021) details how the COVID-19 vaccine is being distributed. The vaccine supply chain is described as a “complex, interconnected web of manufacturing, shipping and precise preparation”. The supply chain begins at pharmaceutical manufacturers across the country that produce vaccines. Organizations and hospitals that will receive vaccines must then consider which COVID-19 vaccine that they wish to receive. The Pfizer and BioNTech’s COVID-19 vaccine requires very cold storage, while Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccine can be stored at traditional freezer temperatures. Tiberius, the federal government’s central COVID-19 vaccine tracking system, and daily monitoring procedures both track and ensure that the incremented doses arrive to their designated destinations on time. The vaccine is kept in special coolers while in transport. Once the COVID-19 vaccine doses arrive at their destinations, they are placed into the appropriate storage. The vaccine will then be used to vaccinate people who are eligible to receive it.

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According to nj.com (January 11, 2021), more than 1 million people in New Jersey have registered to get the COVID-19 vaccine when they become eligible. People who registered have been divided into four eligibility categories: healthcare workers and long-term care residents and

staff; critical and essential workers; people with high-risk conditions and adults over the age of 65; and the general population. Seven percent of healthcare workers and those who work or reside in long-term care facilities registered for the vaccine. Thirty-one percent of critical and essential workers have signed up to receive the vaccine. Forty-three percent of people who have high-risk conditions and those over the age of 65 have registered for the COVID-19 vaccine. Twenty percent of the general population have registered for the vaccine. Click [here](#) to read more.

With this demand for the COVID-19 vaccine, state officials are asking people to wait until the phase group that they are part of is allowed to receive the vaccine, according to nj.com (January 11, 2021). New Jersey is not requiring eligible individuals to show to documentation of their eligibility, as it would slow down the process. Click [here](#) to read more.

Although New Jersey healthcare workers have largely supported and accepted the COVID-19 vaccine, there has been apparent low registration from healthcare workers, according to *The Burlington County Times* (January 11, 2021). As of Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, more than 150,000 New Jersey healthcare workers received the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and are beginning to receive their booster shots. More than 200,000 people in the Phase 1A group, which includes residents and staff of long-term care facilities, have received the COVID-19 vaccine. Click [here](#) to read more.

An article from *NJBIZ* (January 11, 2021) details that there are supply shortages of the COVID-19 vaccine from the federal government, according to Governor Phil Murphy and New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli. One of the goals set by the Murphy Administration are to vaccinate 70 percent of eligible adults within a six-month window. As of Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, the state administered 214,000 vaccines; 199,000 were the first dose with the remainder being the second dose.

While touring one of the six COVID-19 vaccine “mega-sites” at Rowan College of South Jersey in Gloucester County, Governor Murphy expressed hope that the incoming Biden Administration will increase the distribution of both the Pfizer and BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. Click [here](#) to read more.

According to an article originally published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (January 11, 2021), several long-term care facilities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania have reported that the distribution of COVID-19 vaccine has been both slow and uneven. Both states are distributing the COVID-19 vaccine to long-term care facilities through a federal program that partners with CVS and Walgreens. Both CVS and Walgreens declined to say how many doses of the vaccine they have received or given. Click [here](#) to read this article, which was republished on the Boulder County Community Services Department website.

Health experts say that a person who had COVID-19 should still receive the COVID-19 vaccine, according to nj.com (January 12, 2021). Health experts say that after individuals recover from an illness, their immune system should keep them from getting sick again right away. Scientists are unsure as to how long this immunity would last or how strong it is. Vaccines are designed to bring a more consistent and stronger immune response. Click [here](#) to read more.

As to which group should be next to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, an op-ed published on nj.com (January 10, 2021) written by Robert A. Francis, President and CEO of Planned Companies, believes that this should be essential workers, such as janitors, security guards, maintenance technicians and front-desk concierge workers. He also states that the description of “essential” is too wide-ranging and vague of a term and states that there should be a clearer definition. Click [here](#) to read this op-ed.

### **COVID-19 Vaccine “Mega-Sites” in New Jersey**

New Jersey first responders were among the first to receive a COVID-19 vaccine at the COVID-19 vaccine “mega-site” located at Rockaway Townsquare Mall in Morris County, according to northjersey.com (January 8, 2021). The site is being operated by Morris County in partnership with state officials and Atlantic Health System, which is a member of NJAMHAA. The site hopes to administer up to 2,400 vaccinations a day at its full capacity. Click [here](#) to read more.

*The Press of Atlantic County* (January 11, 2021) has published a series of photographs of Governor Phil Murphy touring the mega-site located at the Rowan College of South Jersey in Gloucester County. Click [here](#) to view the photographs.

### **The COVID-19 Vaccine: Federal and National News**

The Trump Administration is asking states to increase the speed of delivery of COVID-19 vaccines to people who are aged 65 and older and to individuals who are considered to be at high risk by no longer holding back the second dose of the vaccine, according to nj.com (January 12, 2020). Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar stated that with the current state of vaccine production, the second dose of the two-shot COVID-19 vaccines can be released without jeopardizing immunization for those who receive the first dose. This means that the number of places where people will be increased by adding community health centers and pharmacies. Click [here](#) to read more and [here](#) to read a press release from the Department of Defense.

The HHS has also updated its guidance stating that it is requesting that hospitals report data on COVID-19 vaccination to healthcare workers and patients once per week, beginning January 13, 2021. The data will be available in the HHS TeleTracking System. HHS indicated that states certified to submit COVID-19 data to HHS on behalf of their hospitals will communicate details about how to report the data. HHS also stated that it might publicly report facility-level data on the HHS Protect public portal, which can be accessed [here](#); however, it is uncertain at this time whether or not HHS will make this data public. Click [here](#) to read the guidance from HHS.

According to nj.com (January 11, 2021), employers can require their employees to be vaccinated for COVID-19. The Employment Opportunity Commission has issued guidance stating that the Americans with Disabilities Act does not apply to the COVID-19 vaccine. If an employer administers the vaccine to an employee, the employer is not seeking information about an employee’s impairments or health status. Click [here](#) to access this guidance. However, there are exceptions in which an employee may be excused from a vaccine requirement. This includes religious exemptions and employees who have underlying medical conditions, such as severe allergies. Click [here](#) to read more.