



Town of New Castle, NH  
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## COVID Update February 12, 2021

### **There is a lot of new information this week.**

The great news is that some 330,000+ individuals over age 65 or under age 65 deemed medically vulnerable have already registered as part of phase 1B. This exceeds the estimated 325,000 people in this phase.

### **There is increased vaccine supply in the works.**

A new federal partnership will allow an additional 3,400 doses/week through Walgreens. This means about 21,500 doses are coming to NH weekly.

### **How this extra supply is being used:**

With the Walgreens weekly allotment the state will be using that extra capacity to try to schedule people for earlier first doses. Starting with those scheduled the furthest out, state workers will be contacting people to see if they want to get a much earlier appointment at a nearby Walgreens. **People can't contact Walgreens themselves at this time.** If you do somehow manage to sign up via Walgreens independent of the VAMS system, it will cancel your spot in the VAMS system-so stick with VAMS.

The state also will be identifying and contacting those currently with the latest scheduled second doses first to move them up. Much of this is via phone, so answer your phone. **THEY WILL NOT ASK YOU YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER, FOR YOU TO BUY ANYTHING, OR OTHER PERSONAL DETAILS** (bank account number, etc). The conversation will be very straightforward. In other words, watch out for scammers.

If you are trying to move your second vaccine appointment yourself, you may either go into VAMS and find an appointment within seven days of the recommended second dose (you do need to cancel your second dose appointment before rescheduling) or phone 211 and press option 1. To avoid a wait, phone at off hours. The number is operating 6am-10pm 7days per week.

From now on, people who get their first doses will be automatically scheduled at the vaccination site for their second dose.

The goal of the state is to get 2nd doses within 1 week of the recommended Pfizer 21 days or Moderna 28 days. The CDC now says that the second dose is effective in creating immunity even if it is given 42 days after the first dose- however the state is planning to stick to the 21 and 28 day guidelines.

### **Guidelines after you have received 2 vaccine doses:**

First, you need to be at least two weeks out from the second dose to be fully immune. At that point, if you are exposed to someone with COVID and you are asymptomatic, you do NOT need to quarantine.

However, if you develop any COVID symptoms after exposure, you need to isolate, be tested for COVID, and follow quarantine/isolation guidelines.

Other recommendations remain in place for fully vaccinated people. They include wearing masks, social distancing and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces.

### **Why do I need to continue to follow social distancing guidelines after receiving 2 vaccine doses?**

Until research shows otherwise, there's a chance that people who get the COVID-19 vaccine can still become infected without experiencing symptoms and spread the virus. Even after getting two doses, the available vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna are not 100% effective at preventing COVID-19.

That means if you get COVID-19 after the vaccine, your immune system will have a good chance at fighting it off, but it may allow small amounts of the virus to spread.

You might have a mild case or no symptoms, but your body can still spread the virus through respiratory droplets from your nose or mouth and potentially infect someone without the same level of protection from vaccination.

**In terms of socialization with others who have received both vaccine doses,** Dr. Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said there is no CDC guidance on what to do when groups of people who have received both vaccine doses want to get together. Current CDC advice is to keep wearing a face covering and staying 6 feet from others when possible. "But I believe that's going to change," Fauci said. "We're talking about this at the level of the CDC."

### **Good news for those who have recovered from COVID:**

The CDC already recommends that people who have recovered within the last 90 days from Covid-19 (diagnosed via PCR or rapid antigen testing) do not need to quarantine if newly exposed to someone who is infected. In other words, for the first 90 days after you have recovered from COVID, you do not need to quarantine if you are exposed again.

### **Other vaccine news:**

Johnson and Johnson states its single dose vaccine is ready to go once approved under EUA. This is expected to happen late this month.



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### **Masks: The CDC recommends double masking.**

For more detail: Across many parts of the country, life in masks has become the norm for the better part of the past year. Now, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is offering new guidance. Wednesday the agency recommended that Americans wear tighter fitting mask—or even two masks—in order to slow the spread of covid-19. The guidance came with a study that demonstrated that improved masking can reduce exposure to potentially infectious aerosols.

The particular instructions specify that masks should fit tightly over the nose, mouth, and chin with a wire at the top to prevent air from leaking out along the top; the masks should contain at least two layers. If one only has access to loose-fitting surgical masks, the alternative of placing a tightly fitting cloth mask over the surgical one is suggested. The general idea is to reduce the ability of particles to escape around the edges of the mask. The new guidance goes so far as to recommend modifying medical procedure masks by knotting the ear loops and tucking in any extra material. Indeed, when both the source and receiver wore masks modified to fit more tightly, the receiver's exposure to projected particles (simulating a cough) were reduced by more than 95 percent as compared to no masks at all.

As the death toll in the United States approaches 500,000 and as the nation rushes to vaccinate a larger swath of the population, the updated guidance emphasizes mask-wearing as one of the best defenses against more transmissible variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

### **Contact tracing:**

In the last month, daily active cases have dropped more than 50% in New Hampshire, and because of that, the state is looking to change its response strategy. In December, the state stopped its contact tracing and monitoring efforts because with so many cases, it was not effective. Health officials are now looking to move from mitigation to containment.

"We are in the position now, given that our numbers have dropped from on average 800-900 new infections per day to now we're closer to 300-400 per day, we're actually in the process of looking to transition back to public health investigating each and every person diagnosed with COVID-19," Dr. Benjamin Chan, the state epidemiologist, said.

Chan warned that if one of the COVID-19 variants is detected in New Hampshire, the numbers could go back up, so it's important for Granite Staters to wear masks and continue to maintain a social distance of 6 feet from others.

**Mitigating that good news:**

People are weary of following COVID social distancing guidelines and letting down their guard. Please do not be one of these people.

A new study has determined that the more contagious variant of the coronavirus first found in Britain is doubling in prevalence roughly every 10 days in the United States.

The South African variant has been found in the US.

**Further details:****A troubling vaccine halt:**

Just as South Africa was preparing to distribute its first million doses of AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine, devastating news emerged: A clinical trial failed to demonstrate that the vaccine offered protection against mild or moderate illness caused by the South African variant, which is estimated to make up 90 percent of all cases there.

As a result, the South African government paused the rollout of AstraZeneca's vaccine.

The company's trial of about 2,000 people found that the vaccine was only about 10 percent effective against the South Africa variant. Because the trial volunteers were relatively young and unlikely to become severely ill, it was impossible to know whether the vaccine would safeguard against hospitalizations or death.

The study was small and has yet to be peer-reviewed.

**Travel within the US:**

U.S. officials are considering whether to require airline passengers to have a negative coronavirus test before boarding domestic flights. Testing is already required when returning to the US.

**Good news in nursing homes:***Decline in nursing home cases could be related to vaccinations*

New COVID-19 cases among nursing home residents and staff have dropped more than 50% in about four weeks, according to a CNN analysis of the latest data published by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The data captured cases reported between the week ending Dec. 20 and the week ending Jan. 24.

A separate analysis by the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living found that cases have dropped twice as fast in those nursing homes that vaccinated residents and staff.

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