



# **COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**

## ***Department of Health***

### **COVID-19 Update for Virginia**

May 14, 2021

Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your partnership in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic for over a year now. Please visit the [Virginia Department of Health \(VDH\) website](#) for current guidance, epidemiologic data, and information. The following updates are included here:

- **Updated CDC Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People**
- **Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Authorized and Recommended for 12-15 Year Olds**
- **Importance of Not Missing COVID-19 Vaccination Opportunities**
- **Importance of Second Dose Administration of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna Vaccines**
- **Upcoming Webinar with a Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccination Expert Panel**
- **Importance of Testing Returning International Travelers and Encouraging Quarantine**

#### **Updated CDC Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People**

On May 13, CDC updated [Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People](#). A growing body of evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people are less likely to have asymptomatic infection and less likely to spread the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance in any setting, except where required by federal, state, or local rules and regulations, including local businesses and workplaces. This guidance does not apply to healthcare settings, correctional facilities, or homeless shelters. Guidance for residents and staff of healthcare settings can be found in the [Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination](#). People who have a condition or are taking medications that weaken the immune system are advised to talk to their healthcare provider to discuss their activities; they may need to keep taking all [precautions](#) to prevent COVID-19.

VDH plans to adopt the CDC masking recommendations once they have been fully reviewed. Governor Northam's 7th amended Executive Order 72 is set to take effect on May 15; please monitor the [Governor's Executive Action](#) webpage to remain abreast of any changes, including those that may be related to masking requirements. As a reminder, until a person is fully vaccinated, they should continue to follow all precautions that are recommended by public health.

### **Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Authorized and Recommended for 12–15 Year Olds**

On May 10, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) expanded the emergency use authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine to include adolescents 12 –15 years of age. The FDA determined that the known and potential benefits of this vaccine in individuals 12 year of age and older outweigh the known and potential risks. The available safety data support the EUA in this age group.

On May 12, CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met to review the safety, immunogenicity, and efficacy of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in people 12–15 years old. They also discussed clinical considerations and implementation of this vaccine in adolescents. ACIP voted to support use of this vaccine in individuals 12 years of age and older and CDC adopted these recommendations.

ACIP also concluded that COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Janssen (Johnson & Johnson)) and other vaccines may now be administered without regard to timing. This includes simultaneous administration of COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines on the same day. [ACIP's recommendations](#) and [CDC's updated clinical considerations guidance](#) were published today.

### **Importance of Not Missing COVID-19 Vaccination Opportunities**

Now that we have ample supply of COVID-19 vaccine in Virginia, our strategy has shifted to making access to COVID-19 vaccine as easy as possible and to addressing concerns among Virginians who remain hesitant to get vaccinated. It is critical not to miss a single opportunity to administer a vaccine. You are the most trusted resource for your patients in making health decisions. Your strong recommendation to get a COVID-19 vaccine is one of the most important factors in your patients' decision to accept vaccination. I encourage you to make every effort to vaccinate every eligible patient you serve. Tell your patients how important getting the COVID-19 vaccine is to protect their health, as well as the health of their family and friends.

Given this goal, it is acceptable to open a multi-use vial without a guarantee that you can use all doses contained within it. It is no longer imperative that you use every dose of vaccine the week you receive it. It is acceptable to have multiple weeks of inventory on hand as long as all manufacturer specifications for storage and handling are followed.

### **Importance of Second Dose Administration of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna Vaccines**

Some Virginians have not returned for their second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine. Although this could be happening for a variety of reasons, it is important that we make it as easy and convenient as possible for everyone receiving a two-dose vaccine to receive the second dose so they can get the full protection available.

Please be flexible in accommodating second-dose needs. Try to schedule each person's second-dose appointment when they receive their first dose. If that is not possible, make sure they understand that they can receive that second dose anywhere that offers that vaccine. If they cannot find a second-dose appointment at either [vaccinate.virginia.gov](https://vaccinate.virginia.gov) or by calling 877-VAX-IN-VA (877-829-4682), they can email [2ndvaxdose@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:2ndvaxdose@vdh.virginia.gov) and VDH will find an appointment for them.

### **Upcoming Webinar with a Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccination Expert Panel**

All providers are invited to join a webinar on May 18 from 12:15 to 1:15 PM featuring a Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccination Expert Panel to answer your questions. Additional information is available [here](#).

### **Importance of Testing Returning International Travelers and Encouraging Quarantine**

Air passengers entering the United States are required to have a negative COVID-19 test result or documentation of recovery from COVID-19 before they board a flight to the United States. It is also important to test returned travelers three to five days after travel and to encourage them to stay home and quarantine for seven days after travel. If they do not get tested, they should stay home and quarantine for ten days. International travelers who are fully vaccinated should still be tested, but they do not have to quarantine.

I appreciate the many sacrifices healthcare workers have made to protect Virginians from COVID-19. The excess morbidity and mortality is not only tragic but puts a significant strain on healthcare professionals, practices, hospitals, and fatality management professionals. For the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the excess cases represented an additional 1,592 deaths managed by the statewide system, a 21.5% increase from 2019, further stressing an already overworked system. I appreciate their efforts.

I am thankful for the recent decrease in COVID-19 cases in Virginia and hopeful that with your help we can vaccinate enough Virginians to get us to a new normal. Please continue to contact your [local health department](#) if you have questions about COVID-19.

Sincerely,

M. Norman Oliver, MD, MA

State Health Commissioner