DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Dear Connecticut COVID-19 Vaccine Providers,

Thank you again for your continued efforts in the COVID Vaccine roll-out. This email contains important information for COVID-19 vaccine providers – please read this message in its entirety.

UPDATES

CT WiZ will be down on Monday 6/07/2021 from 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm

On Monday 6/07/2021 CT WiZ will be down between 8:00 pm and 10:00 pm for a new release. Please plan your data entry and electronic querying accordingly.

COVID-19 vaccine related articles

- CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Breakthrough Case Investigations Team. COVID-19 Vaccine Breakthrough Infections Reported to CDC — United States, January 1–April 30, 2021 *MMWR*. 2021;70(21);792–3.

- Pilishvili T, Fleming-Dutra KE, Farrar JL, Gierke R, Mohr NM, Talan DA, et al. Interim Estimates of Vaccine Effectiveness of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines Among Health Care Personnel — 33 U.S. Sites, January–March 2021 *MMWR*. 2021;70(20);753–8.

- A list of CDC's latest vaccine effectiveness studies is available from the CDC website at COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness Research | CDC.

Open Data Poral

Connecticut Open Data Portal (ODP) is a collection of state agency data that are freely available to the public at data.ct.gov. The Portal is managed by the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. COVID-19 vaccination coverage data are posted on the ODP and updated each Thursday afternoon. A summary of COVID 19 vaccination distribution data can be see here: https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/bhcd-4mnv.

Vaccine coverage datasets can also be downloaded from the Portal including datasets on vaccine coverage (both at least one dose administered and fully vaccinated) by age, race/ethnicity, gender, county, town, census tract and residence in high priority zip code. An overview of COVID-19 vaccine coverage data on the Portal will be given on the Weekly COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Update on June 9th.

COVID-19 DQA Report to Clinics and Pharmacies

- A COVID-19 data quality assurance (DQA) report for clinics and pharmacies with more than 10 patient or vaccine record errors (including patients with a mixed product series, expired doses administered, and patients with more than 2 doses) and second doses due will be sent via a secure One Drive folder to the primary contact in CT WiZ for your revision and follow up.

- Our DQA team will follow up to ensure you understand how to make corrections in either your Electronic Health Record (EHR) system or in CT WiZ. Any questions can be directed to the DQA staff who sent you

the report. Please remember to ensure the confidentiality of patient data by using the secure OneDrive folder and never email patient information.

Reporting Reminder

As part of the COVID-19 provider agreement, COVID-19 vaccine providers agree to report administered doses within 24 hours. There have been some considerable delays in reporting, particularly from providers partnering on mobile clinics. Please ensure timely reporting of doses administered and follow the provider agreement. Other providers and vaccine recipients are counting on you so that they can access the information from CT WiZ, our immunization information system.

REMINDERS

Myocarditis and Post-Vaccination Safety Monitoring

- Since April 2021, cases of myocarditis and pericarditis have been reported in the United States after mRNA COVID-19 vaccination (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna). As part of COVID-19 vaccine safety efforts, CDC has been monitoring myocarditis and pericarditis in multiple safety systems, including the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) and the Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD).

- CDC and its partners are actively monitoring these reports, by reviewing data and medical records, to learn more about what happened and to see if there is any relationship to COVID-19 vaccination.

- **To date, there has not been a safety signal identified in either VAERS or VSD.** CDC will continue to evaluate reports of myocarditis/pericarditis occurring after COVID-19 vaccination and will share more information as it becomes available. Healthcare providers should consider myocarditis in an evaluation of chest pain after vaccination and report all cases to VAERS.

- CDC published Clinical Considerations for myocarditis and pericarditis following COVID-19 vaccination. Additionally, resources for the public have been added to CDC's website that can be a resource for your patients.

- CDC continues to recommend COVID-19 vaccination for everyone 12 years of age and older, given the greater risk of COVID-19 illness and related, possibly severe complications.

Vaccine Lot Management and Expiration

In order to minimize the number of unused expired doses and manage expired doses correctly, we encourage providers to:

- Monitor expiration dates weekly, rotate stock as needed, and follow a "first in, first out" strategy to manage inventory.

- If nearing expiration, check posted manufacturer information for the most up to date expiration/extension information for vaccine lots.

- Based on the latest expiration information, REMOVE expired vaccine from the storage unit IMMEDIATELY. Do not give staff opportunity to administer expired vaccine.

    o If expired vaccine is inadvertently is administered, it is considered a vaccine administration error and requires remediation including a VAERS report, contacting the recipient to inform them of the error, and may or may not require revaccination based on the manufacturers' guidance. Guidance on vaccine administration errors can be found in Appendix A of the Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States.

- Vaccine disposal: dispose of the vaccine vial (with any remaining vaccine) and packaging as medical waste. Do NOT return vaccine in the thermal shipping container.

- Check your vaccine stock for lots expiring using the [CDC's Vaccine Lot Number and Expiration Date webpage.](#)
  - Request access to a new COVID-19 Vaccine Lot Number report via CDC's Vaccine Code Set Management Service (VCSMS). This report includes COVID-19 vaccine lot numbers and expiration dates provided to CDC by the vaccine manufacturers. This report is updated daily and can be used to support vaccine administration, inventory management, and jurisdiction IISs. Complete the registration form on [CDC's Vaccine Lot Number and Expiration Date webpage](#) to request access to the report.

Report expired vaccine

Please promptly report any expired vaccine to the CT WiZ [Helpdesk](#). Keep in mind that there are no negative consequences for reporting waste, and it will not negatively impact future allocations. CT DPH recognizes that unused expired vaccine is a normal part of this phase of the vaccination program.

Resources/References

- [Vaccine Storage and Handling Toolkit include COVID-19 vaccine addendum](#)
- [Identification, Disposal, and Reporting of COVID-19 Vaccine Wastage](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine product web pages and storage and handling summaries](#)
- [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States](#)

Pfizer is available in a 450-dose shipment

- The new 450 dose pack configuration is now available for order. The new 450-dose pack includes 3 trays of 25 vials each.
- Vials will be shipped in the same container as the 1,170-dose orders and will include the same Controlant temperature monitor.
- The newly extended refrigerator storage temperatures (see below) should decrease the need for dry ice. Therefore, Pfizer asks that the shippers and Controlant monitors be returned within 10 days. There will be no dry ice replenishment for the 450-dose pack.
- New ancillary kits have been created to support the 450-dose minimum order size, including a potential pediatric ancillary kit containing only 1" needles.
- All other supplies in the ancillary kit remain the same.

Changes in storage temperatures for Pfizer

The FDA has amended the Pfizer EUA to allow undiluted, thawed Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine vials be stored in the refrigerator at 2°C to 8°C (35°F to 46°F) for up to 1 month. This is an update to previous guidance which stated that thawed, undiluted vaccine vials could be stored in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Current [Pfizer COVID vaccine storage and handling](#):

- All Pfizer configurations are shipped ultra-cold.

- Ultra-Cold (-70°C): Undiluted vials may be stored in ultra-cold freezer until expiration date or temporary in the shipper with regular dry ice replenishment per guidance (unchanged).

- Frozen (-20°C): Undiluted vials may be stored in freezer for up to 2 weeks (unchanged).

- **Refrigerated (2°-8°C): Undiluted, thawed vials may be stored in refrigerator for up to 1 month.**

- **Total storage time for Pfizer in freezer and refrigerator should not exceed 45 days.**

- Thawed vaccine cannot be refrozen.

[FDA In Brief: FDA Authorizes Longer Time for Refrigerator Storage of Thawed Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Prior to Dilution, Making Vaccine More Widely Available | FDA](#)

Please update your COVID Vaccine location listings

As providers consolidate schedules and locations, please check and update your listings on [covidvaccinefinder.ct.gov](#). If any corrections are needed, please email [Caroline.Hou@ct.gov](#).

Please ensure the following are correct:

- Vaccine type(s) offered;

- Operating hours noted in the details area;

- Walk-up appointment availability; locations with walk up appointments are now indicated on the finder

- If you have plans to close a clinic location, please let us know.

Unneeded ancillary kit supplies

Some providers have been contacting the state about unneeded ancillary supplies left over from kits. If you have supplies in the ancillary kits that you will be unable to use, please feel free to donate them to the healthcare agency or charity of your choice. You do not need to send partial kits back to the state. This probably goes without saying, but please do not donate the HAIOU syringe and needle configurations listed above that are being investigated for quality issues by the FDA.

Summary of Adolescent Vaccine Tools

Tools for the public:

- [COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens](#) provides information about the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines for adolescents aged 12 and older, how to find a vaccination provider for adolescents, and what to expect during and after vaccination.

- [COVID-19 Vaccines for Preteens and Teens](#) is a printable fact sheet for parents that explains the benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine for their children, safety information, and what to expect during and after vaccination.

- **Frequently asked questions**: Two [new FAQs](#) address questions about the safety and benefits of COVID-19 vaccination for adolescents aged 12 and older.

- **Myth-buster about menstrual cycles**: Your menstrual cycle *cannot* be affected by being near someone who received a COVID-19 vaccine. This [question and answer](#) explains why.

- **Myth-buster about infertility**: It is safe for people who would like to have a baby one day to get a COVID-19 vaccine. This [question and answer](#) explains why.

- **Key things to know**: The web pages [Key Things to Know about COVID-19 Vaccines](#) and [About COVID-19 Vaccines](#) have been updated to include the recommendation that adolescents aged 12 and older get vaccinated.

Information for Healthcare and Vaccine Providers:

- **Pediatric toolkit**: The [Pediatric Healthcare Professionals COVID-19 Vaccination Toolkit](#) provides materials to help healthcare providers give parents clear and accurate information about COVID-19 vaccines. The toolkit includes answers to common questions, an explanation of how mRNA vaccines work, and printable materials to give to parents.

- **FAQs about consent for minors**: [FAQs](#) have been posted on the Pfizer-BioNTech product page for providers with information about consent, prescreening questions, and other issues related to the vaccination of minors.

- **Sample patient letter**: Healthcare providers can customize and send this [sample letter](#) to encourage their patients to get a COVID-19 vaccine. It includes the new recommendation that everyone aged 12 and up get a COVID-19 vaccination.

Avoiding missed opportunities to vaccinate and minimizing wastage

- Providers should follow the CDC's [clinical best practice for vaccination as well as best practices when managing inventory](#) to maximize vaccination and minimize dose wastage.

- **While we want to continue to follow best practices to use every dose possible, we do not want that to be at the expense of missing an opportunity to vaccinate every eligible person when they are ready to get vaccinated.**

- Please continue to use creative strategies to avoid wastage, such as:
  - Shared provider waitlists, phoning or texting those with appointments in coming days to present early, inviting recipients to contact their friends to be vaccinated;
  - Actively inviting in individuals who are in the vicinity (e.g., some providers have made PA announcements for grocery store-located pharmacies);
  - Consider establishing and promoting standing vaccination days or half-days to increase likelihood of larger numbers of people presenting for vaccination on the same day;
  - Vaccinate family members or friends who accompany patients to medical visits even if they are not established patients at the vaccinating practice;
  - Continue outreach to employers or other community partners that have a large membership or network to arrange vaccination events.

- Once punctured, multidose vials must be used within 12 hours for Moderna, 6 hours for Pfizer, and 2 hours for J&J/Janssen.

- Continue to report vaccine wastage to the DPH [Helpdesk](#).

UPDATED CDC Webpages and Clinician Resources

- General information about COVID-19 vaccine products for clinicians and healthcare professionals can be found on the [COVID-19 Vaccination webpage](#).

- Clinical information including FAQs, Contraindications and Precautions as well as Administrative resources can be found for each vaccine on their own product webpage.

  - [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#)

- Moderna COVID-19 vaccine
- Janssen/J&J COVID-19 vaccine

- Recent updates to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Communication and Education Product Inventory

  - FAQs for Private and Public Healthcare Providers About Implementing the CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Program in Provider Practices | CDC

  - Risk Benefit Analysis (cdc.gov)

As always, please continue to encourage patients to register for V-safe; report adverse events to VAERS.

Hospital Discharge Vaccination

All acute care hospitals should be offering COVID-19 vaccines to all individuals upon discharge to skilled nursing and assisted living facilities by May 17th. Hospitals should offer the J&J vaccine, but may offer an mRNA vaccine if an individual refuses the J&J vaccine. We will work with long term care pharmacy partners and other providers to ensure the individual receives their second dose of mRNA vaccine.

Hospitals are encouraged to offer vaccines in their emergency departments as well. Hospitals may offer the J&J vaccine or an mRNA vaccine. Hospitals should not be discouraged from offering mRNA vaccines due to concern for loss of follow up. Hospitals should do their best to recall patients for second doses, but it is understood that some may be lost to follow-up.

Ordering Portal Update

- **The ordering portal has been updated to remove the minimum tray size constraints from the dose requested section. Providers may now order in quantities less than the minimum tray size and we will work to partner providers to accommodate these requests.**

Upcoming Clinic Trainings and Office Hours

- **Weekly CoVP Update**
  Provides CoVP Vaccinating Providers updates on the CoVP Program and Q&A with DPH staff. **Wednesdays** 9:00am-10:00am; Join: **CoVP Office Hours**

- **CoVP CT WiZ Enrollment Office Hours**

  Provides information about the CoVP enrollment process in CT WiZ and Q&A with DPH staff. **Mondays & Thursdays** 12:00pm-12:30pm; Join: **CoVP CT WiZ Enrollment Office Hours**

- **Vaccine Storage and Handling Assessment**
  For clinics who completed CoVP enrollment and received an invite to attend. **Tuesdays & Thursdays** 10:00am-11:00am and 1:00pm-2:00pm; **By invitation Only**

- **VAMS Live Helpdesk Office Hours**

  Clinics can ask questions about VAMS functionality to DPH staff. **Tuesdays** 9:00am 10:00am & **Thursdays** – 1:00pm – 2:00pm; Join: **VAMS Live Helpdesk Office Hours**

Visit: VAMS Training (ct.gov) and CT WiZ Training for VAMS enhancement release notes and training materials on VAMS and CT WiZ.