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Subject: COVID-19 Vaccine Program (CoVP) Provider Bulletin, Week of September 27



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Dear Connecticut COVID-19 Vaccine Providers,

This communication is being sent to all key contacts at provider organizations administering COVID-19 vaccine— please read this message in its entirety. Please feel free to share it with others in your organization who may benefit from the update. Note that all of our communications are archived on our [web site](#).

UPDATES

Below is a list of upcoming informational activities related to booster recommendations, as well as resource pages that are in the process of being revised and will be available in the days ahead:

- [COCA Call: What Clinicians Need to Know About the Latest CDC Recommendations for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Booster Vaccination](#) (Tuesday, Sept. 28, 2021, 2-3 PM ET). We recommend that at least one representative from all COVID provider organizations attend this call.
- Updated [CDC page: Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shot](#)
- Updated [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Approved or Authorized in the United States](#)

REMINDERS

We are keeping information on many important reminders from past communications in the space below. To prevent this section from becoming too lengthy, what remains is selected carefully. All past communications are available [here](#).

Booster dose recommendations

COVID-19 Vaccine Providers in Connecticut may begin administration of Pfizer booster doses in line with the FDA emergency use authorization and CDC recommendations.

CDC recommends:

- People 65 years and older and residents in long-term care settings **should** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series,
- People aged 50–64 years with underlying medical conditions **should** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series,
- People aged 18–49 years with underlying medical conditions **may** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on their individual benefits and risks, and
- People aged 18-64 years who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting **may** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on their individual benefits and risks.

Note that persons who received Moderna or J&J vaccines for their primary doses are not included in the CDC recommendation currently. We expect to receive several continued updates to booster dose guidelines over the next weeks. These will include further clarification of today's recommendations; and likely include recommendations related to the Moderna and the J&J vaccines as well as potential expansion of the recommended population groups.

We encourage providers to begin outreach to those who are 65+ and at least 6 months from the second dose of the primary series of Pfizer as well as those who are under 65 and meet the CDC recommendations to encourage them to receive booster doses.

Guidance regarding eligibility verification for booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines

As has always been the case during the COVID-19 vaccine roll out, the State of Connecticut wants to ensure that vaccine access is simple and straightforward for vaccine recipients. Providers should continue to ensure that COVID vaccines are readily available for individuals who seek them and that administration of a COVID-19 vaccine is medically appropriate and conducted in line with the ACIP guidelines.

Ensuring patients receive a COVID vaccine at the appropriate interval:

Connecticut DPH recommends that providers have a procedure for ensuring that individuals receive their booster no sooner than the minimum recommended interval. This can be accomplished in one of several ways, in order of preference:

- Verify the vaccine information, including the brand and date(s) a patient received their previous COVID-19 vaccine doses using CT WiZ; or

- Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Vaccination Card, VAMS Certificate, CT WiZ Certificate, or other documentation of the recipient's vaccination record; or
- If neither of the above are possible, ask the patient for the vaccine brand(s) and dates of previous COVID-19 doses received during the scheduling process (and including logic in scheduling systems to ensure appropriate interval).

Ensuring recommended individuals receive a COVID booster:

Connecticut DPH recognizes that the categories of individuals for whom boosters may be confusing or not immediately clear to all patients. Connecticut DPH continues to support patient self-identification and attestation as a sufficient basis for confirming that an individual is within one of the categories for whom boosters are recommended.

Additional considerations:

DPH reminds providers that there is no residency requirement to receive COVID-19 vaccines and that identification (ID) is likewise not required. Although ID may be requested from the patient for purposes of billing, no individual should be turned away due to lack of ID and providers should endeavor to create a welcoming environment for people to seek COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccine Ordering

Providers who wish to order additional Pfizer vaccine at this time so they have adequate stocks for booster dose administration over the next days are encouraged to do so.

We encourage providers to please order only according to your anticipated COVID-19 vaccine needs for the next 10 days; vaccine supply is adequate. Given that it is difficult to estimate need, it is preferable that you place smaller doses more frequently rather than larger orders less frequently.

Please verify your listings are correct on ct.gov/covidvaccine. If you need to add new clinic locations, remove a clinic location, or modify the products you offer, please email Caroline.Hou@ct.gov.

Vaccine Expiration

Some CoVP providers have J&J doses that have recently or are soon to expire. CDC has indicated that the expiration for these doses will not be extended again. Providers should dispose of expired vaccine appropriately and report the wastage in the DPH ticketing system.

When reporting wasted doses to the Helpdesk, please select the “Report Vaccine Wastage” ticket option, then select “Other” as the wastage reason and type “Expiration” in the text box when prompted. Please make sure that inventory is updated in Vaccine Finder, VAMS, or CT WiZ as appropriate.

This is a good time for providers to follow the best practices of regularly checking inventory for expired vaccine and removing expired inventory to prevent it from being administered. If you have not yet registered for the report, visit [CDC's Vaccine Lot Number and Expiration Date webpage](#) and complete the registration form to request access. [Moderna](#) and [J&J](#) also have expiration date look up websites.

Influenza Corner

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices *Prevention and Control of Seasonal Influenza with Vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, United States, 2021–22 Influenza Season* is available [here](#).

If a patient is eligible, both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same visit, [as recommended by CDC and its Advisory Committee on Immunizations Practices \(ACIP\)](#).

In addition to flu vaccine, the COVID-19 vaccine can be given with other vaccines as well. Even though both vaccines can be given at the same visit, providers should follow the recommended schedule for either vaccine: If your patients haven't gotten the currently recommended doses of COVID-19 vaccine, they should get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible, and ideally they should get a flu vaccine by the end of October.

Giving all vaccines for which a person is eligible at the same visit is considered a [best practice](#) as it increases the probability people will be up to date on recommended vaccines. It also is an important part of immunization practice, especially if a health care provider is uncertain that a patient will return for additional doses of vaccine.

Coadministration of COVID-19 and Influenza vaccines

You may administer COVID-19 and influenza vaccines without regard to timing (both live, attenuated and non-live influenza vaccines). This includes administration of COVID-19 and influenza vaccines on the same day, as well as coadministration at any time interval. ([CDC | Interim Clinical Considerations: Coadministration of COVID-19 and Influenza vaccines](#))

With influenza season approaching, there may be compelling logistical advantages to offering patients COVID-19 and influenza vaccines on the same day, and you may encourage patients to receive these on the same day. There are no safety concerns for coadministration.

Best practices for [administering more than one vaccine](#), including COVID-19 vaccines and influenza vaccines, include:

- When preparing more than one vaccine, label each with the name and dosage (amount) of vaccine, lot number, the initials of the preparer, and the exact beyond-use time, if applicable.
- Always inject vaccines into different injection sites.
 - Separate injection sites by 1 inch or more, if possible so that any local reactions can be differentiated.
 - Each muscle (deltoid, vastus lateralis) has multiple injection sites (Vaccine Administration Route and Site).
- If administered at the same time, COVID-19 vaccines and vaccines that might be more likely to cause a local injection site reaction (for example, [high-dose and adjuvanted inactivated influenza vaccines](#)) should be administered in different limbs, if possible ([Prevention and Control of Seasonal Influenza with Vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)—United States, 2021-22](#)).
- Inject vaccines rapidly without aspiration since aspiration is not recommended before administering a vaccine (Vaccine Administration Route and Site).
- There are many existing resources on administration and co-administration of vaccines relevant for healthcare providers, including:
 - [Pink Book: Vaccine Administration | CDC](#)
 - [You Call The Shots: Vaccinating Adolescents](#) (cdc.gov)
 - [Vaccine Administration Training Module](#) (cdc.gov)
 - [Intramuscular \(IM\) Injection: Sites](#) - YouTube
 - CDC also is developing a job aid and video for health care professionals on coadministration of vaccines.

The following are reminders about important influenza-related events coming up. Put these dates on your calendar to keep up with flu over the course of the 2021-2022 influenza season.

- September 9 (recording now available): [Webinar September 9, 2021 - 2021-2022 Influenza Vaccination Recommendations and Guidance on Coadministration with COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- October 7: [National Foundation for Infectious Disease press conference launch](#)
- October 7: 2021-2022 Recommendations for Influenza Prevention and Treatment in Children: An Update for Pediatric Providers (we will share link once available)
- October 12: [Ad Council campaign](#) launch
- October 15: [Weekly FluView Reports](#) for 2021-2022 begin

Ensure Best Practice by Checking CT WiZ Before Vaccinating

Prior to administering any vaccine, including the COVID-19 vaccine, it is important that a recipient's prior vaccine history be referenced in the Immunization Information System (CT WiZ); best clinical practice is to verify that the recommended interval has elapsed since a previous dose of vaccine and that the preferred brand of vaccine be administered.

- If your clinic established bi-directional data exchange, you can query CT WiZ for the patient immunization record [electronically from your EHR](#).

- Every CoVP enrolled clinic can [look up the patient immunization record](#) in the [CT WiZ user interface](#). Those who signed the CoVP Provider Agreement and the primary and back-up vaccine coordinator already have CT WiZ access.
- If your staff need access to CT WiZ, [request a username](#) and select the 'Clinic Access' role. Access to CT WiZ is defined in [EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 13C](#).
- If you need support, please submit a [Helpdesk ticket](#).

Report vaccine temperature excursions and vaccines wasted to the [Helpdesk](#) by following the prompts and submitting a ticket.

- Immediately report all temperature excursions in storage units containing COVID-19 vaccines. Staff will be notified in real time of the excursion and will assist you. Please store vaccines in the storage unit in a paper bag marked "do not use" until a determination about the viability of the vaccine has been made, in consultation with the manufacturer and the Immunization Program.
- Also report to the Helpdesk all COVID-19 vaccines deemed wasted or expired. This includes Pfizer vials from which a sixth dose cannot be extracted.

COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy

The increased circulation of the highly contagious [Delta variant](#), the [low vaccine uptake among pregnant people](#), and the increased risk of severe illness and pregnancy complications related to COVID-19 infection among pregnant people make vaccination for this population more urgent than ever.

The CDC webpage [COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#) contains some key messages for you to share with your patients.

Post Notice to Patients About Reporting to CT WiZ at CoVP Clinics

All clinics enrolled in the CoVP must post the [Notice to Patients About Reporting to CT WiZ](#), to let vaccine recipients know their records are being reported to CT WiZ. If you are reporting through VAMS, this data is transmitted to CT WiZ.

Replacement CDC COVID Vaccination Cards

- *Recommendation:* Post your procedure for recipients to request replacement cards, in a location visible to recipients at your clinic as well as on your website. If your clinic needs additional CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Cards, contact DPH.Immunizations@ct.gov and we will email you a pdf of the card for your clinic to print (*note: these should not be posted on your website*). Large type print cards are also available via pdf.

- *Reminder:* You should issue CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Cards to your vaccine recipients. DPH cannot issue a CDC card to recipients. DPH can provide the immunization record from CT WiZ. DPH's procedure is on our COVID-19 Vaccine and DPH Immunization webpages at: [I lost my vaccine card, how do I get another one? \(ct.gov\)](#) and [Request an Official Immunization Record](#).

Upcoming Clinic Trainings and Office Hours

- **CoVP Update -- next meeting October 6**
Provides CoVP Vaccinating Providers updates on the CoVP Program and Q&A with DPH staff. **Every other Wednesday** 9:00am-10:00am; Join: [CoVP Office Hours](#)
- The **CoVP 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** 10:00am-11:00am & **Thursdays** 1:00pm-2:00pm; **By invitation Only**
- **VAMS & CT WiZ Live Helpdesk Office Hours** Clinics can ask questions about VAMS and CT WiZ functionality to DPH staff. **Tuesdays** 9:00am 10:00am; Join: [VAMS Live Helpdesk Office Hours](#)

Visit: [VAMS Training](#) and [CT WiZ Training](#) for enhancement release notes and training.

Thank you for all of your ongoing work and support of our COVID-19 vaccine roll-out in Connecticut.

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