



February 19, 2021

## **New Yorkers with HIV Are Now Eligible to Receive a COVID-19 Vaccine**

Dear Colleague,

**All people with HIV who live in New York State (NYS) are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.** For a list of groups currently eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in NYS, visit [nyc.gov/covidvaccinedistribution](https://nyc.gov/covidvaccinedistribution).

**Encourage patients with HIV to get vaccinated against COVID-19.** People with HIV are [a priority](#) for vaccination, as many have comorbidities that increase risk of severe COVID-19 and face socioeconomic conditions that may increase risk of exposure. A provider's recommendation is one of the [strongest predictors](#) of a patient receiving a vaccine. Reach out to patients with HIV and help them get access to COVID-19 vaccine.

**Help eligible patients get vaccinated against COVID-19.** If your facility has received vaccine, offer vaccination to eligible patients. Assist patients to navigate the vaccine appointment systems of the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) at [vax4nyc.nyc.gov](https://vax4nyc.nyc.gov), [NYC Health + Hospitals](#) and [NYS](#). New Yorkers can find a vaccination site and make an appointment at [vaccinefinder.nyc.gov](https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov). If they need assistance making an appointment at a City-run site, they can call 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692). Inform patients that vaccine supplies are limited. Encourage them to check regularly as new appointments will be added as more vaccine becomes available.

**Patients need to bring proof that they live in NYS or NYC and are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.** If they are eligible because they have HIV and are being vaccinated by their health care provider, their medical records can serve as proof of eligibility. Otherwise, when scheduling an appointment, patients will need to complete a [certification](#) confirming they have an underlying health condition that makes them eligible for vaccination. They do not need to state which health condition or provide any other evidence to demonstrate which condition they have. For more information on proof of eligibility, visit [nyc.gov/covidvaccine](https://nyc.gov/covidvaccine).

**HIV care providers do not need to clear their patients to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.**

Currently, the [Moderna](#) and [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) vaccines are only [contraindicated](#) by history of allergic reaction to the vaccine, one of its components or polysorbate. Clinical trials established the general safety and efficacy of these vaccines, but only the Moderna trial included people with HIV. Following [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) guidance, inform patients that we lack sufficient data on vaccine safety or effectiveness specific to people with HIV and people

who are immunocompromised. Counsel immunocompromised people (including people with HIV with low CD4 counts) that because we do not know whether the vaccine will work as well for them, they should be especially cautious to avoid potential exposure to COVID-19, even after vaccination.

**Continue to engage patients in HIV care and other necessary health care.**

Immunocompromised people may be at increased risk of severe COVID-19. While New Yorkers should limit activities outside the home, no one should forgo regular HIV care or other necessary care. Make sure patients with HIV are screened for viral load and CD4 count at least every six months and have regular opportunities to discuss any barriers to care. HIV care clinics can provide some care through [telehealth](#) or video chat. See guidance for providers of HIV services during COVID-19 from the [NYC Health Department](#) and the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#).

**Ensure equal access to care.** HIV and COVID-19 disproportionately affect communities of color. In NYC, [86%](#) of people with HIV diagnosed with COVID-19 are Black or Latino, and these groups have greater mortality associated with [HIV](#) and with [COVID-19](#). Furthermore, in NYC, Black and Latino people are [less likely](#) to have received a COVID-19 vaccine. Counsel patients with HIV, particularly those who are Black or Latino, that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and provide critical protection for their health.

For more information on COVID-19, visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/health/coronavirus). Select “Information for Providers” for Dear Colleague updates, health alerts and advisories, webinars and other resources.

Sincerely,



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