

Clinician Update –Vaccine Brief

Dec. 18, 2020, Late Edition

Latest Vaccine Webinar Recording

This evening, Virtua Health’s clinical leaders presented distribution plans for the COVID-19 vaccine. More than 375 clinicians participated in the webinar, which indicates the high level of interest and engagement among our medical community. The webinar was recorded and is available [here](#).

More Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

A number of clinician questions were answered in last night’s session, but below find some common questions regarding vaccine distribution, allergic reactions, and side effects. Additionally, we encourage you to visit the [Coronavirus Resource Center](#) on the VINE or (for affiliated physicians) [Digital 411](#) for additional information.

Is it mandatory for me to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Virtua’s infectious disease experts feel strongly that these vaccines are essential to bringing the COVID-19 pandemic to an end. That said, it is your decision whether to receive the vaccine. Virtua leadership encourages you to assess all the information that Virtua, the FDA, and the CDC have made available so that you feel informed and empowered by your decision.

How will I know when it’s my “turn” to get vaccinated?

To ensure the rollout of the vaccine is coordinated and well organized, leaders are creating a structured scheduling process. This varies depending on department. Virtua has identified the “first priority” groups (based on which departments have the highest exposure to COVID-19) and scheduling for those groups is underway.

Will I need two doses of the vaccine?

Yes. Virtua is offering the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine; this vaccine requires two doses that are 21 days apart.

Will vaccines be offered on federal holidays?

No. At this time, Virtua does not intend to schedule vaccine appointments on Christmas Day (Dec. 25) and New Year’s Day (Jan. 1, 2021).

Will walk-up vaccinations be available?

No. Virtua will only be able to provide the vaccine to colleagues with scheduled appointments. Details on the scheduling process will be available soon.

Who decides the order in which people and departments are receiving the vaccine? Will everyone on my team get the vaccine on the same day?

Virtua has identified departments that have an inherently elevated risk of exposure to COVID-19 based on their function. An example of this is emergency services, be it in the field or in the hospital. These departments have already been notified and received the first opportunity to schedule vaccine appointments.

It is important that we stagger vaccine appointment dates within our teams. This is to avoid the possibility of having several people from the same department miss work at once due to a potential reaction to the vaccine (such as fatigue or headache).

Ultimately, we are in a strong position. All colleagues who want to receive a vaccine will get the opportunity to do so as Virtua continues to receive the vaccine doses. This is a major operational undertaking and we appreciate your patience.

Would any aspect of my medical history or general health influence whether I should get the vaccine?

Virtua leadership has heard from many colleagues with specific health concerns and conditions. This includes, but is not limited to, people who are:

- Pregnant or breastfeeding
- Immunosuppressed
- Taking certain medications that may affect bleeding
- Scheduled to receive other, unrelated vaccines in the near future

There is no restriction from the FDA regarding these conditions, but you are advised to carefully review the safety materials that are made available to you. **Only your personal care provider – in most cases, a primary care physician or OB/GYN – can give advice and recommendations that are specific to you.** If you have specific health concerns, schedule a conversation with the people who provide your care so that you can make a decision with confidence.

What if I have a history of allergic reactions to vaccines?

The only contraindication to the Pfizer COVID-19 is anaphylaxis to *prior* Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine or its components. If you have a history of anaphylaxis to vaccines or severe hypersensitive reactions to vaccines, you should speak with your personal health care provider to discuss any concerns. In addition, please alert the Virtua vaccine organizers once you are scheduled.

Note: Anaphylaxis to foods or other oral medications does not preclude you from receiving the vaccine.

What should I do if I become ill after receiving the vaccine?

Everyone should monitor his or her health after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. The clinical trial of the Pfizer vaccine indicated that some people experienced reactions such as fever, chills, headache, and fatigue. It is believed that this is an indication the vaccine is working, and most symptoms are resolved within 24 to 48 hours.

If you experience a medical emergency, call 911; do not delay medical intervention. If you have concerns about your symptoms, call your care provider.

If you develop symptoms that cause you to be unable to work or perform the functions of your job, please follow these steps:

- Report absence to your leader or scheduling office in accordance with the standard notification requirements of your department.
- Colleagues will use PTO/NJ Sick, if available, or unpaid time for absences due to vaccination side effects.
- Call the Colleague COVID-19 Hotline (609-444-2828) should your vaccination symptoms persist beyond 24 hours.

Call the Colleague COVID-19 Hotline (609-444-2828) as soon as possible if you have symptoms of cough, shortness of breath, or loss of taste or smell that might be more indicative of COVID-19 rather than related to vaccination.