

Clinician Update

Jan. 14, 2021

COVID-19 Exposure Between Vaccine Doses

Some of Virtua's physician leaders have been getting calls and emails about how to handle second-dose appointments if one contracts COVID-19 after the first vaccine dose and before immunity has taken effect. While there is no one-size-fits-all answer and it is a decision people will have to arrive at on their own, Dr. Topiel has created some general guidance to address this concern:

What should I do if I get COVID-19 between my first and second dose of the vaccine?

Vaccination of individuals with a known, current COVID-19 infection should be deferred **at minimum** until the person has recovered from the acute illness (if the person had symptoms) and criteria have been met for them to discontinue isolation.

Someone with COVID-19 that developed *after* the first dose of the vaccine may receive the second dose, but that person must take all necessary precautions to ensure he or she does not put others at risk. This means that a second dose can only occur if...

- At least 10 days have passed since the onset of symptoms and/or a positive test result, **AND**
- At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, **AND**
- All other symptoms have improved.

That said, increasing evidence suggests it might be beneficial to postpone your second-dose appointment by 60 to 90 days if you acquire COVID-19 between vaccine appointments. It is still anecdotal information, but this might avoid exaggerated unwanted side effects with the second vaccine dose, as well as make a vaccine available to someone else while you still have protective immunity.

This is a scenario without a straightforward solution. Should you find yourself in this position, consider consulting with your primary care provider to arrive at a decision that feels right to you. If you need to postpone your second-dose appointment for this specific reason, please email the Virtua Access Center at covidvaccine@virtua.org.

Vaccine Locations Transitioning

Over the next few weeks, Virtua Health will wind down and discontinue **first-dose** appointments at the COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic at the Virtua Barry D. Brown Health Education Center in Voorhees (the HEC). This will allow us to redirect our energies to staff and support the Burlington County COVID-19 Vaccine Mega-Site in Moorestown. (See next article below.) **All Virtua colleagues, including affiliated clinicians, who would like to receive a first-dose vaccine appointment at the HEC should act now.**

Note: Until further notice, anyone who receives a first-dose vaccine at the HEC will also receive the second dose at the HEC.

Please reach out to the Virtua Access Center by emailing covidvaccine@virtua.org. When you email, please include your name, job title, date of birth, and dates and times you are available to receive a vaccine appointment.

Virtua Health Partners with State on Vaccine Mega-Site

Virtua is proud to join with the State of New Jersey, Burlington County, and several other partners to launch a COVID-19 vaccine "mega-site" in Moorestown, one of six large vaccine clinics across the state. Morris County and Gloucester County mega-sites opened last Friday. The remaining locations will open later in the month. A soft launch of the Moorestown site occurred this week, with a limited number of appointments, to test and validate the process. This site is expected to be fully operational in the coming days, when we will provide more details on appointment scheduling and criteria.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Burlington County COVID-19 Vaccine Mega-Site

Below are the answers to common questions about this facility and the others across the state.

Why did Virtua want to be a part of this mega-site?

Since COVID-19 arrived in our region, Virtua's incredible colleagues have provided our neighbors with quality, compassionate care under changing and challenging circumstances. Now we get to be part of the pandemic's conclusion by taking a lead role in the regional vaccine rollout.

What is Virtua's role in the mega-site?

Virtua is the health care lead for the site. Virtua is staffing the onsite pharmacy, as well as scheduling, operations, registration, vaccination, and observation for the site. Virtua's experience in mounting pop-up testing clinics and providing the COVID-19 vaccine to its own workforce will prove invaluable in getting this mega-site up and running. Virtua is excited to have such a significant role in guiding our community through this end-phase of the pandemic and providing a source of hope to our region.

Is the mega-site only available to Burlington County residents?

No. In fact, the location of the mega-site was selected, in part, for its proximity to Camden County. When it opens, the site is intended to serve the entire region.

How can people schedule a vaccine appointment if they qualify?

Details will be available in the near future. Appointments will be limited initially based on the state's rollout plan.

Are walk-up vaccinations available?

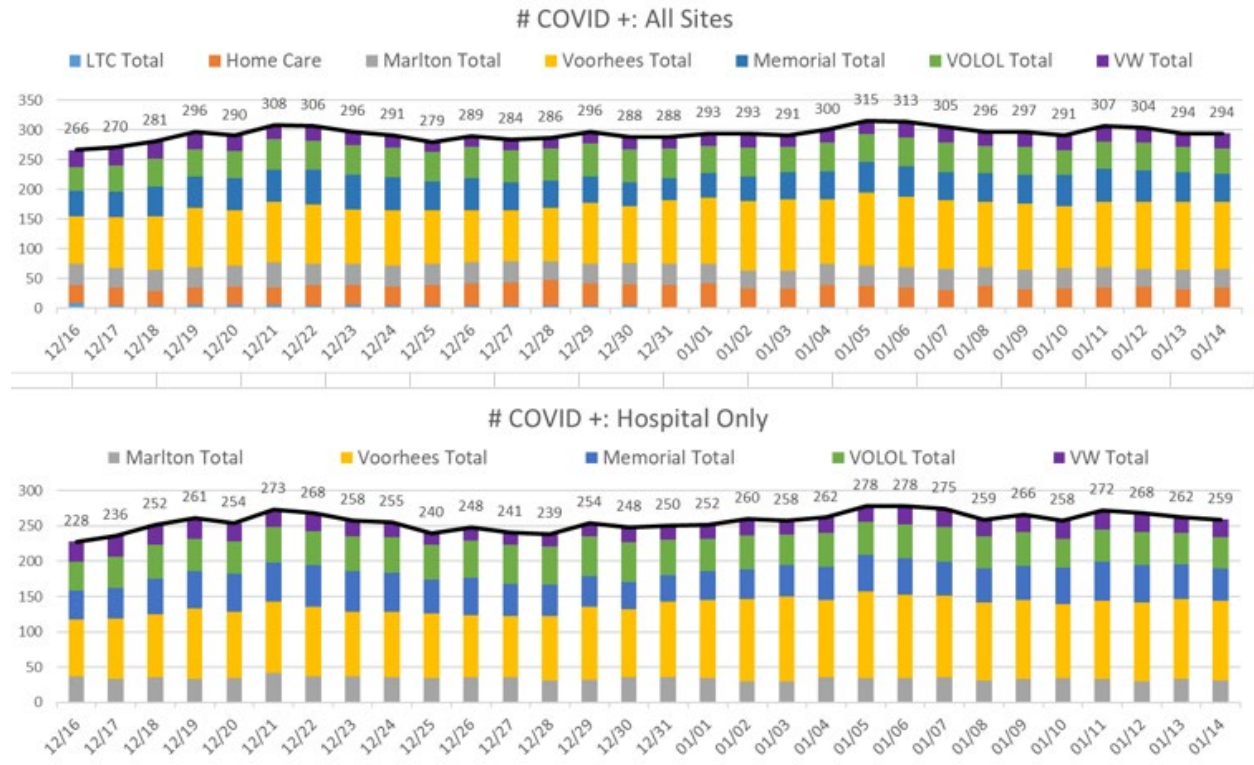
No. The mega-site will operate by appointment only.

Where are the other mega-sites in the state?

The other locations are Atlantic County, Bergen County, Gloucester County, Middlesex County, and Morris County.

What is the cost for being vaccinated?

There will be no charges or co-pays to vaccine recipients. As authorized, insurance providers will be billed for vaccine administration. For those without insurance, vaccination is free of charge.



Fast Facts

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey is currently at 1.1.
- Locally, in the tri-county area, there have been a total of 1,871 confirmed deaths, as of 1 p.m. today. The state also reports “probable” deaths from COVID-19, with figures shared separately on the [state dashboard](#). For the three counties, probable deaths would account for an additional 140 fatalities.
- The total number of cases are as follows:
 - Burlington County 24,973
 - Camden County 32,833
 - Gloucester County 16,755

What to Expect after Getting a Second Dose of a COVID-19 Vaccine

Starting last Friday, and throughout the weekend, Virtua began the process of administering second-dose vaccinations to hundreds of Virtua colleagues. Reports from these colleagues indicate that many of them experienced the temporary “side effects” that are common with this and other vaccines.

Remember: Everyone should monitor his or her health after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Common reactions include pain where you received the shot, as well as fever, chills, tiredness, and/or headache. Medical experts believe 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 health care provider. If you develop symptoms that cause you to be unable to work or perform the functions of your job, Virtua employed clinicians should 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.

For additional information on the subject, please consult the [CDC website](#).

Top Vaccine Questions at Virtua

We recognize that it can be difficult to keep up-to-date about all the details pertaining to the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Below are some of the most frequently asked questions we receive, as well as the answers. Over the last few weeks, we've provided a number of FAQs and are in the process of assembling them into a downloadable document for you to share with colleagues and patients. Look for an upcoming *Clinician Update* to get the link. In the meantime, here are the most frequently asked vaccine questions and answers.

Should I be vaccinated if I had a known exposure to COVID-19?

No. If you are aware of a high-risk exposure to COVID-19, you should not come to the vaccine center and put others potentially at risk. Also, any future symptoms may become confused with a vaccine reaction. You are asked to delay vaccination for 14 days from the time of exposure. If you end up COVID-positive, delay vaccination as outlined below.

If I had COVID-19 a few months ago or more, should I be vaccinated?

The CDC says yes. The CDC website reads: "At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person."

If I had COVID-19 in the past few weeks, should I be vaccinated?

As stated above, vaccination of people with known current COVID-19 infection should be deferred until the person has recovered from the acute illness (if the person had symptoms) and criteria have been met for them to discontinue isolation.

While there is no recommended minimum interval between infection and vaccination, current evidence suggests that reinfection is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection.

Should I wear eye protection to the vaccine clinic?

Yes. If you have eye protection – such as goggles or a face shield – please wear it to your appointment. If you do not possess these items, eye protection will be available to you onsite.

Once I'm vaccinated, do I need to wear a face mask, social distance, and all those other safety measures?

Absolutely! We are advancing toward the end of this pandemic, but it will take many months and require all of us – vaccinated or not – to practice the very best safety behaviors. This means continuing to adhere to the best practices at our respective work areas. It also means wearing masks when

interacting with people beyond our household, washing our hands thoroughly and often, and keeping a safe distance when at work or in the community.

The vaccine studies showed an impressively high percentage of protection, but no vaccine is perfect. There is also insufficient data to know with certainty whether vaccinated people can develop a “viral carrier state” and transmit the virus to others (even if they do not become ill themselves).

Now is not the time to let our guard down. In fact, let’s work together to be extra vigilant about safety.

Readying for the Cures Act Deadline

Virtua Health is preparing for the 21st Century Cures Act to go into effect by March. It will bring significant change to the way personal health information (PHI) is shared with patients and their approved designees.

The Cures Act also requires physicians to update their digital contact information through the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES) database. The goal is to create one source of truth for physician verification across the nation. Providers who fail to comply will be publicly reported, but more importantly, it is expected to impact quality incentive payments.

Virtua is updating their employed physicians’ profiles, but non-employed clinicians who are not part of Virtua Medical Group will need to complete this task or assign a staff member as a designee to contact the NPPES. [Please refer to this tip sheet for guidance.](#)

Reminder, we have created an area on Digital 411, to share [Cures Act resources](#). There you will find frequently asked questions (FAQs), presentations, and links to clinical and patient advocacy agencies offering additional guidance. Look to coming issues of *Clinician Update* for more information and direction on what to expect when Cures goes into effect.

If you have any concerns or questions, send them to VirtuaClinician@virtua.org.

Virtua in the News

Doctors encouraged by COVID-19 antibody treatment, despite difficulties - Virtua is among the few providers offering monoclonal antibody therapy for high-risk patients. Dr. Martin Topiel provides details in this *KYW Newsradio* story which includes a patient who explains how he benefited from the treatment. Listen and read [here](#).

Virtua cardiologist who had stroke after COVID-19 receives vaccine - Dr. Troy Randle spoke with *NBC 10* about his experiences and how the coronavirus can cause cardiovascular problems. He also advocates for the vaccine after overcoming his initial hesitancy. Watch [here](#).

Virtua announces first South Jersey baby of the New Year - Baby Aniela came into the world at 12:05 a.m. on New Year's Day at Virtua Voorhees Hospital. More bundles of joy arrived later that day at Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes and Virtua Memorial Hospitals. The *6-ABC* reports [here](#).

Confidence delivered with second shot of COVID-19 vaccine - As of early January, Virtua had already vaccinated more than half of its 15,000 staff members. This *WHYY* story features Virtua nurse Veronica Manlove, who was excited to receive the added protection of the second dose soon. Read [here](#).

