



St. Mary's COVID vaccine update for Monday, Feb. 22, 2021

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Summary

St. Mary's continues to work with the State of Georgia to secure additional supplies of COVID-19 vaccine. Supplies remain critically low and last week's severe weather has impacted shipments from manufacturers, but we are encouraged to learn of increasing allocations from the federal government to the states. Georgia's allocation is now up to 160,000 doses per week from 146,000 earlier this year. Because the portion of that allocation that is coming to St. Mary's remains very limited, we are not able to provide vaccinations to the general public. Our supplies continue to allow us only to vaccinate St. Mary's colleagues and a limited number of first responders (EMS, law enforcement and fire) from Clarke, Oconee, Greene, Franklin and Hart counties. We urge all others who qualify for the vaccine to contact their local health department.

Vaccine information

St. Mary's continues to receive a very limited number of COVID-19 vaccine doses each week, which we apportion to our three hospitals for vaccination of colleagues and first responders. We expect this number to rise but do not know how much or when.

To date, St. Mary's has administered 98 percent of the 3,275 doses we have received. The remaining 2 percent is obligated to those who received their first dose from us and still need their second dose.

We continue to schedule appointments only for colleagues and first responders and only as supplies permit. Interest in the vaccine continues to be strong among St. Mary's colleagues. Also, we are encouraged that vaccine hesitancy seems to be declining as more people see colleagues, friends and family members being safely vaccinated.

Our understanding is that the federal and state strategy is shifting from hospital-based vaccine administration to community administration, primary through health departments and pharmacies. We continue to monitor this situation closely.

Georgia remains in Phase 1A+. Those eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccine include:

- Health care workers (nurses, physicians, EMS, and others who work in the hospital or medical office setting)

- Long-term care staff and residents
- Adults ages 65 and over and their caregivers
- Law enforcement and fire personnel, including dispatchers, 911 operators, and volunteer firefighters

Additional updates

4-week waiting period set for screening mammograms and chest CTs

Patients who need a screening mammogram or low-dose chest CT scan for lung cancer are being advised to wait 4 weeks after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. This is because the COVID-19 vaccine causes a strong immune response that can affect lymph nodes in the armpit area. The inflamed lymph nodes could be misinterpreted as areas of concern, leading to unnecessary follow-up testing and worry. Keep your doctor informed of when you receive your COVID vaccines. If you self-schedule a mammogram, be sure to make your appointment for before your first COVID shot or at least 4 weeks after your second COVID shot.

FDA updates convalescent plasma EUA

The FDA revised and reissued its emergency use authorization for COVID-19 convalescent plasma to treat hospitalized patients with COVID-19. The changes include updates based on additional clinical trials. They also clarify the authorization's limit to high-titer convalescent plasma for hospitalized patients early in the disease and those with impaired humoral immunity and add to the tests acceptable for qualifying high-titer COVID-19 convalescent plasma. St. Mary's is able to administer convalescent plasma therapy to inpatients when medically indicated.

Supply to increase, but winter weather delays vaccine shipments

According to the Georgia Hospital Association, the White House has announced that the federal government will increase its shipments to the states to 13.5 million doses per week. However, the CDC also warned of widespread delays in shipments due to severe winter weather across much of the nation. The CDC identified shipments originating from Louisville, Ky., and Memphis, Tenn., as the most likely to be impacted. The Georgia Department of Public Health confirmed that some vaccine that was to have been delivered last week was held back by the manufacturers because of the dangerous weather.

Tips on getting vaccinated and what to do afterwards

Get vaccinated when it's your turn.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to stop the pandemic. It is also the safest and most effective way to protect yourself against the virus. The vaccine contains no live virus and cannot give you COVID-19. It may cause 24-36 hours of mild flu-like symptoms as it activates your immune system, and more rarely, headache, nausea or a rash. A tiny percentage – about 11 per million – may have a treatable allergic reaction. By comparison, COVID-19 causes serious illness in about 20 percent of the people it infects (200,000 per million) and death in about 1.8 percent of those diagnosed with it (18,000 per million).

Don't sign-up for multiple appointments at area vaccination sites.

Signing up for multiple appointments will only slow down the vaccination process for everyone seeking a vaccine. Please make only one **appointment** for a vaccine to save time and resources and to prevent wasting vaccine. You may sign up on multiple **wait lists** for notification on when vaccine supply becomes available.

Get vaccinated – even if you've already had COVID-19.

There are several reasons to get vaccinated, even if you've had COVID-19. First, and most important, you could become re-infected, especially if your initial infection was mild and your body did not produce enough antibodies. It is unclear if natural infection will protect you from COVID-19 variants, so it is best to get vaccinated to avoid getting COVID-19 again. Early evidence is promising that the currently available vaccines provide excellent protection against severe illness and death when people become infected with one of the new variants.

Wait to get your vaccine if you currently have COVID-19 or have been recently exposed.

You should wait until you no longer have COVID-19 symptoms and at least 14 days after first signs of illness before receiving the vaccine. If you were treated for COVID-19 with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, you should wait at least 90 days before getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

If you were exposed to someone with the virus, you should complete your quarantine before scheduling an appointment for the vaccine.

What to do After Getting Your COVID-19 Vaccine

Get your second dose.

COVID-19 vaccines need two doses 21 or 28 days after the first vaccine depending on the brand you received. While the first dose provides some protection, the second dose is what really activates your body's immune response to provide the highest level of protection from COVID-19.

Wait to travel.

Getting vaccinated can make traveling safer, but the risks are not completely gone. The CDC still recommends limiting travel to essential travel. Your chance of being exposed to COVID-19 while traveling is high, especially with new variants emerging.

Avoid other vaccines for 14 days.

The CDC recommends avoiding other vaccines for 14 days before and after getting your COVID-19 vaccine. This helps to keep your immune system from being overloaded.

Continue wearing masks and practice physical distancing after you're vaccinated.

Even after you get vaccinated, you should continue to wear a mask, wash your hands, practice physical distancing and avoid crowds. These proven measures save lives and are the best tools we have to fight this pandemic until we have enough people vaccinated.