Vaccinations began this week at New Jersey’s long-term care facilities under the federal Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program between the Centers for Disease Control and CVS and Walgreens.

To date, 503 facilities have been scheduled to receive their first vaccinations through CVS and 36 with Walgreens.

Mildred Clements, 103, of Roosevelt Care Center in Old Bridge, was the state’s first long-term care resident to receive the vaccine during a CVS clinic at the site. Esther Moodey, a nurse at the facility, was the first staff member.

"I felt normal. I was excited to receive it. I was nervous but it's beautiful," said Esther, who has been a staff nurse at Roosevelt Care Center for over 14 years. "I'm glad I got it. I'm glad I'm the first one to get it, too."

The federal partnership program expects to vaccinate over 109,880 residents and staff through the beginning of February, with more sites of congregate living to be scheduled.

"Throughout this pandemic, the residents and staff of our long-term care facilities have been among the most severely impacted," said New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) Commissioner Judith Persichilli. “With the start of this large-scale vaccination effort, we are continuing to strengthen protections for our most vulnerable populations, along with the staff who have been truly courageous in caring for them.”

Vaccinations are also underway for residents and staff of the state’s three veterans memorial homes.

In addition to long-term care residents and staff, 72,657 individuals have now received the vaccine. Information for Phase 1A healthcare workers on vaccination locations can be found at covid19.nj.gov/vaccine.

New Jersey continues its journey to vaccinate 70 percent of the eligible population. The state has been awarded over 400,000 vaccine doses in December. Of that, approximately 120,000 doses have been reserved for long-term care facilities’ residents and staff; 280,000 doses have been allocated to hospitals and community sites. Of that, approximately 265,000 have been delivered with the remainder expected at the end of this week.
South Jersey Doctor Working to Battle Hesitancy over COVID-19 Vaccines

Dr. Jubril Oyeyemi says he understands the hesitancy surrounding whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine, which he says will “be primary care doctors’ biggest challenge” in an op-ed published in The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Oyeyemi, who moved to the U.S. from Nigeria when he was 16, serves as medical director of the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers and the Community Health Institute at Virtua Health, and is the founder and executive director of the Cherry Hill Free Clinic.

“As a person of color, seeing how this virus ravaged minority patients is devastating — and I know this vaccine will be the only way to save lives,” he wrote in the op-ed.

Dr. Oyeyemi recalled a nursing colleague he had worked alongside with for years who died from COVID-19, as well as a family member, and recalled the loss of one patient — a 40-year-old father of four.

From caring for everyone from patients to family members to friends, “once you’ve seen that, getting a vaccination that offers 95% efficacy — it’s a no brainer,” he told NJDOH. “We’ve all been hit by this.”

He said he wrote the op-ed after seeing social media posts and hearing anecdotal stories about vaccine hesitancy, particularly from members of the Black community.

“There are a lot of concerns with the community especially with the historical baggage from the scientific and medical community among Black folks,” he said. “My hope is to be able to relate to my local community that this is about protecting us.”

Dr. Oyeyemi got his vaccination last week and said he is looking forward to his second booster shot.

If safety is a concern for some, “the vaccine is overwhelmingly safe,” he told NJDOH.

Vaccine Video Series for Healthcare Workers Available

Rutgers Project ECHO recently hosted a COVID-19 Vaccination Essentials webinar series with NJDOH to answer questions from healthcare personnel and to provide updates on vaccine safety, when and where to get vaccinated, what to expect at points of dispensing, and related topics. Videos of the four sessions are now available.

Call Center Tallies Hotline Calls

As 2020 comes to a close, the New Jersey Poison Control Center has spoken to over 70,000 people on the COVID-19 hotline.

Resources

NJDOH COVID-19 Vaccination Page
New Jersey COVID-19 Vaccination Plan

Sign up for Vax Matters