

COVID-19 Vaccination Update, February 12

Many of your colleagues have worked long hours this week to get ready for the significant changes in New York State vaccine eligibility guidance that take effect on Monday, February 15. Here is what you need to know, and what we still do not know, about these changes.

Employee Vaccinations

On Monday, the state plans to start taking weekly vaccine supplies that had been regularly allocated for health care workers and reallocate them for New Yorkers with medical conditions that put them at high risk for severe complications of COVID-19. The state has said that vaccine will still be available for health care workers after that, but exactly how much will be available, and how easy it will be to obtain, remains unclear.

Therefore, if you are eligible and interested in being vaccinated, but haven't yet received your first shot, we strongly recommend that you try to do so by Monday if at all possible. Some of our employee vaccination pods will be open this weekend and you can schedule an appointment at one of them [here](#). (Please do not forward this link outside the Health System. It is only for Mount Sinai employees.)

Eligibility for employee vaccination through this weekend remains as it has been for the last several weeks: you are eligible if you work onsite in any capacity, or if you work remotely and are 65 and over, or if you are a voluntary physician or a patient-facing employee of a voluntary practice.

On Monday, employees working remotely who are under 65 and have one of the medical conditions [specified by the state](#) will also become eligible for vaccination. If you are in that group, we do not yet know what the process will be for you to get vaccinated at Mount Sinai. If you can get vaccinated sooner

at another location, we recommend you do so. We will keep you informed as we learn more.

Vaccinations for Patients With Comorbidities

In addition to our employees, anyone who lives in New York State and has one of these medical conditions is eligible for vaccination as of Monday.

We are emailing all of our patients to let them know about the new eligibility rules and to tell them that, if they have a qualifying medical condition, they will be able to use their medical records in MyChart to prove their eligibility at a vaccine site. We are also telling these patients that, unfortunately, we do not have vaccine supplies for them here at Mount Sinai, and are encouraging them to try to schedule vaccinations through the [New York State](#) or [New York City](#) websites. For patients who do not use MyChart, providers can use a template in Epic to generate an eligibility letter for them. It is important to provide these letters only to patients who are eligible under the state guidelines.

We know this is enormously frustrating for everyone involved. Almost all of us know someone who is eligible for vaccination but can't get an appointment. When it is your parent, grandparent, spouse, or other loved one, it is especially tough. If we could vaccinate them all today, we would. But the reality is that there is not yet enough vaccine to go around. Please bear in mind, though, that this is a temporary problem. More vaccines are being manufactured every day, and at least one new vaccine is likely to come onto the market in the next several weeks. Sooner or later—and once the vaccine supply increases, it may be sooner than you think—everyone who wants a vaccine will get one. And this pandemic will then, truly, be much closer to ending.

Other Updates

As of yesterday evening, more than 32,000 members of our Mount Sinai family had received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, and more than 24,000 had received both. That is a remarkable achievement and puts us among the more successful health systems in New York State at vaccinating our staff. We

have said before how much we appreciate the hard work of everyone involved in the vaccination, but we will say it again. The work you are doing is absolutely vital, and we are all in your debt for your efforts.

Lynne D. Richardson, MD, Co-Director of the Institute for Health Equity Research and Professor of Emergency Medicine, and Population Health Science and Policy, is a co-signer of [an op-ed in *The New York Times*](#) encouraging Black Americans to get vaccinated against COVID-19. It is well worth your time to read.

Next week we are making a change in screening procedures for staff arriving at our facilities, in line with current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Starting on Tuesday, February 16, temperature checks at the entrance will no longer be required for employees. However, you will still be asked on the attestation whether you have had a fever or other potential symptoms of COVID-19.

Finally, it is sobering to think that it has been almost a year since this pandemic changed our everyday lives—at work and at home. Through these many months, you have put in countless hours to care for our community, and we see the dedication and compassion you put into every patient interaction, even when you are stressed and overworked. Yesterday, several of our campuses gave employees the opportunity to connect, appreciate, and pause together. These events are the first of several we have planned over the next few weeks across many Mount Sinai sites to show a small token of our appreciation, a “tip of the cap.” We will never be able to fully express our gratitude and respect for all you have given and continue to give, but we hope that these moments will allow us time to come together in a meaningful way. Please stay tuned for more information.

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