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State Health Department Issues Executive Directive, Standing Order to Ensure Access to COVID-19 Vaccines in New Jersey

PO Box 360
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360

Jeffrey A. Brown
Acting Commissioner

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For Further Information Contact:
Office of Communications
(609) 984-7160

State Health Department Issues Executive Directive, Standing Order to Ensure Access to COVID-19 Vaccines in New Jersey

TRENTON, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) today issued an Executive Directive, allowing anyone six months of age and older to receive a COVID-19 vaccine for the 2025-2026 respiratory illness season. The Department also issued a Standing Order authorizing pharmacists in New Jersey to administer COVID-19 immunizations without a prescription. Together, these actions remove barriers to ensure that all individuals who wish to receive a COVID-19 vaccine are able to do so in the State.

“At a time when COVID-19 cases are increasing across the country and as part of my Administration’s dedication to evidence-based public health action, I am committed to ensuring everyone in New Jersey who wants to receive a COVID-19 vaccination can receive a dose this fall from trusted health professionals,” said **Governor Phil Murphy**.

“New Jersey is committed to defending the principles that safeguard our families and protect the health of our communities. This is about equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine, which has been proven to prevent serious illness and hospitalization,” said **Acting Health Commissioner Jeff Brown**. “Especially as we enter cold and flu season and as students head back-to-school, New Jerseyans are reminded to stay up to date on all recommended vaccinations.”

The actions come in time for respiratory virus season and amid increases in reported COVID-19 cases across the nation, particularly in the West and in the South. They also come after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently rescinded its Emergency Use Authorization for the COVID-19 vaccines and limited who can receive them.

Under the Executive Directive signed by Acting Commissioner Brown, all individuals six months of age and older can receive a COVID-19 vaccine, eliminating barriers to access following these recent changes at the federal level. The Department also recommends that individuals discuss their risk factors for COVID-19 complications and the benefits of receiving the COVID-19 immunization with their health care provider to determine the best course for vaccination.

The Executive Directive is based on clear, scientific, and evidence-based recommendations from trusted medical professionals and organizations, including the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#), the [American Academy of Family Physicians](#), and the [Vaccine Integrity Project at the University of Minnesota](#).

The Standing Order signed today serves as a prescription for any individual ages three years or older to receive an authorized COVID-19 vaccination at a pharmacy without a prescription. Signed by Deputy Commissioner of Public Health Services Novneet Sahu, MD, MPA, a licensed physician, it authorizes pharmacy professionals practicing in the State, in accordance with their scope of practice and applicable federal authority, to order and administer age-appropriate, FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccines to eligible individuals.

The Executive Directive and Standing Order make the COVID-19 vaccine accessible to those who wish to receive it. Children under three years can receive the vaccine from their health care provider while individuals three years and older can also get vaccinated at pharmacies in New Jersey.

“While COVID-19 has become part of our lives, we still have effective tools to minimize outbreaks and reduce the risk of serious complications,” said **Deputy Commissioner Dr. Sahu**. “Vaccines remain our strongest defense, helping to limit the spread of the virus, protecting individuals and communities, and reducing broader social impacts such as missed school and work, and reducing pressure on our health care systems.”

The FDA recently narrowed approvals for the 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccine to only individuals 65 years and over or those with certain underlying medical conditions, though it did not define which conditions are considered high risk. High-risk conditions previously identified by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) include pregnancy, asthma, diabetes, and physical inactivity, among others.

The changes, which were announced by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. via [social media](#), bypassed the normal scientific review process, creating confusion and uncertainty, especially because they conflicted with previous CDC recommendations.

The CDC had previously updated its recommended immunization schedules for healthy children and pregnant women, adding a recommendation for shared decision-making with a clinician. In past years, the shots have generally been available to anyone six months or older.

The Murphy Administration believes that New Jersey residents should have access to a COVID-19 vaccine without a financial burden; therefore, all health insurance carriers are strongly encouraged to continue to cover the costs of the COVID-19 vaccine for all ages six months and older without cost sharing. The Administration will continue to work to support the affordability of immunizations, but today's actions cannot guarantee insurance coverage across all health plans.

“This is about empowering residents to make decisions about their own health,” added **Acting Commissioner Brown**. “It’s also part of a statewide effort that includes coordinating with our sister agencies to protect access to vaccines for anyone who chooses to get one.”

As part of the Murphy Administration’s broader strategy and ongoing commitment to public health preparedness and affordable health care access, the Department of Health convened an Interagency Vaccine Workgroup in late August to minimize interruptions to vaccine availability and coverage. The workgroup brings together leaders from the Departments of Human Services, Children and Families, Education, Banking and Insurance, Law and Public Safety’s Division of Consumer Affairs, and Treasury to enhance coordination.

The new vaccines are expected to be available in some locations in New Jersey now and statewide in the coming weeks. New Jerseyans can expect vaccines to be available from sites like primary care providers, chain pharmacies, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and other health care institutions.

More information about access to COVID-19 and other vaccines is available at: nj.gov/health/vaccines.

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Department of Health

P. O. Box 360

Trenton, NJ 08625-0360