



RETIREE RxCARE™ NEWSLETTER

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Between approaching winter weather and the holiday season, people in the U.S. are spending more time indoors. Coronavirus (COVID-19) cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are continuing to rise in the United States and are at an all-time high. The race to vaccinate against COVID-19 is intensifying as we near the end of 2020 and say hello to the new year. With limited supplies and over 300 million to vaccinate, only the most vulnerable populations will receive the vaccine in the coming weeks and months with hopes of larger scale distribution coming in Spring 2021.

VACCINATIONS ON THE HORIZON

Two companies developing vaccines to hopefully soon be approved for use in the United States are Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Therapeutics.

On December 2 in the United Kingdom, Pfizer achieved the first authorization for a vaccine to combat COVID-19 for emergency use only. Unlike traditional vaccines that use inactivated viruses, Pfizer's mRNA vaccine contains a section of the virus' sequence encoding for the viral antigens that are causing the immune response in those testing positive for COVID-19. This allows for individuals to develop immunity to the virus after vaccination. Pfizer expects FDA approval for emergency use in the United States on or before December 14, claiming 95% effectiveness. Vials will be shipped on dry ice directly to the point of vaccination with Pfizer's "just in time" system, and can be stored at -80 degrees Celsius for up to 30 days. Pfizer's chief executive says it could have up to 50 million doses of the vaccine by the end of 2020, and up to 1.3 billion doses by the end of 2021. This is enough for 25 million people to get their initial shot this year and booster three weeks later, however, still far from enough to meet the demand for the vaccine worldwide through 2021.

Moderna is meeting with the FDA on December 17 to discuss emergency authorization of their mRNA-1273 COVID-19 vaccine candidate. If approved, Moderna has said it will be able to ship 20 million doses by the end of 2020, enough to vaccinate 10 million people with a second shot 28 days following the initial one. Similar to the Pfizer vaccine, Moderna's vaccine candidate requires two injections to prime the immune system to fight off

the virus. Researchers are inconclusive on how long protection could last, though an early study showed that Moderna's vaccine likely provides protection for about three months. However, it is possible that special memory B and T cells in the immune system may retain information about the coronavirus for years or decades following vaccination. In clinical trials, the vaccine was found to be 94% effective with no serious safety concerns. If approved for emergency use, the first injections of Moderna's vaccine could begin on December 21. Vials of this vaccine only require storage at -20 degrees Celsius and can keep for a month at refrigerator temperatures, potentially making them easier to distribute to areas without access to ultra-low temp freezers required to store the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine vials.

As of December 4th, a panel advising the CDC recommends that health care workers who are at the highest risk for contracting COVID-19 should receive vaccinations first, along with residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities. It is unknown at this time which demographics will be next to receive vaccination priority.

CORONAVIRUS AND HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

There are ways to enjoy the holidays while properly protecting yourself from getting or spreading COVID-19. According to the CDC, celebrating virtually or with the people you live with is the safest choice this holiday season. If you choose to socialize with people outside of your "bubble", activities held outside with a limited number of guests are safer than indoor gatherings. You should talk with the host of the event to understand the expectations of the gathering and plan to wear a mask both inside and outside. The CDC has provided a clear overview of [how to select, wear, store, and wash your mask](#) properly on their [website](#). If you are the host, remember that it's better to be safe than sorry. Be clear in your expectations and stay true to what you and your household are comfortable with. It is okay if you are uncomfortable attending a gathering as a guest or decide to postpone or cancel your gathering as a host. Do what's best for you! Remember: do not attend or host any social events if you or any member of your household has tested positive for COVID-19, is awaiting test results, or may have been exposed to the virus.

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ON YOUR TEAM.

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Travel can increase your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. Even if you do not have symptoms, you can still spread the virus during and after your travel. Before traveling, think about whether or not someone in your household or someone you will be visiting is at increased risk for contracting COVID-19. You should also pay attention to case volume where you live and where you will be traveling to weigh the likeliness of getting or spreading the virus. If you do choose to travel, you should be distancing yourself from people outside of your household for two weeks prior and making a testing plan. The CDC suggests a viral test 1-3 days before traveling and 3-5 days after traveling. It also recommends reducing non-essential activities for a week after travel, even if the return test is negative. Without testing you should distance for 10 days following travel. Keep a copy of your test results with you during travel. Do NOT travel if you test positive.

Do what's best for your household this holiday season. Not being able to celebrate with family and friends can be challenging, but remember to take care of your mind and body to reduce stress and anxiety. Get enough sleep, eat right, and enjoy time with those in your own household. There are plenty of ways to get creative and make this holiday season special despite the challenges our world is facing.

CORONAVIRUS AND HOLIDAYS: DO'S AND DONT'S

DO practice social distancing and wearing of masks at gatherings, especially if they are indoors.

DO follow state and local guidelines as they pertain to gathering size and location.

DO limit the number of people preparing and serving food.

DO ventilate indoor gatherings by opening windows and doors.

DON'T shake hands or hug to greet others. Instead, wave and/or verbally greet them.

DON'T travel if you are positive for COVID-19, are awaiting test results, or have potentially been exposed to the virus.

DON'T attend large gatherings. Avoid crowded parades and shopping in busy stores.

DON'T travel without your recent COVID-19 test results. You may be asked for them.

Resources:

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2020/pfizer-covid-19-vaccine>
<https://www.pfizer.com/news/press-release/press-release-detail/pfizer-and-biontech-achieve-first-authorization-world>
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/health/moderna-covid-19-vaccine.html>
<https://www.businessinsider.com/when-get-covid-vaccine-us-fda-pfizer-approval-james-hildreth-2020-12>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>
<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/12/what-we-know-about-u-s-covid-19-vaccine-distribution-plan.html>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/01/health/covid-vaccine-distribution-first.html>



ON YOUR TEAM.

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