

April 24, 2021

Dear Families,

All of us at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene hope you are safe and well. The City of New York has now administered more than five million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, marking a major step forward in our fight to beat back this virus. I am writing to share the good news that all New Yorkers age 16 and older are now eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

If you have a child who is at least 16 years old, I strongly encourage you to make a vaccination appointment for them as soon as possible by visiting vaccinefinder.nyc.gov. You can also call **877-VAX-4-NYC (877-829-4692)** for help making an appointment at a City-run vaccination site.

By getting your child vaccinated, you are helping to protect them from COVID-19 and making your community safer. Also, please consider vaccination for yourself and other household members age 16 and older, if not vaccinated already. Vaccination is the most important step you can take to protect you and your family from COVID-19. While we encourage everyone age 16 and older to get vaccinated, vaccination is especially important for those with an underlying health condition, such as asthma, obesity or diabetes. The same is true for those who live in a multigenerational household or with a person who is at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness. Vaccination is provided at no cost to all and regardless of immigration status.

Of the vaccines currently available in the United States, the Pfizer vaccine is the only one authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for people age 16 and 17. The Pfizer vaccine has been shown to be safe and very effective at protecting people from severe COVID-19 illness, hospitalization, and death.

While you may be asked about health insurance, it is not required. Your insurer may be billed by the vaccinating provider, but you will not be charged a copayment or other fee.

A few things to know about the Pfizer vaccine:

- Type of vaccine: mRNA (see [How the mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Work](#)).
- Number of shots: two shots, 21 to 42 days apart
- How it is administered: a shot in the muscle of the upper arm
- Does not contain eggs, animal products, preservatives, latex, or the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Side effects are usually mild to moderate and may include soreness or swelling on the arm where you got the shot, headache, body aches, tiredness and fever. Side effects are more common after the second shot and less common in older adults. Side effects usually last about one to two days after they begin.
- Your child cannot develop COVID-19 from the vaccine.

For more information about the vaccine, see the [FDA factsheet](#).

Where can my child get vaccinated?

Visit vaccinefinder.nyc.gov to find a site that offers the Pfizer vaccine. There are many places in NYC where your 16- or 17-year-old can receive the Pfizer vaccine, including most hospital clinics. If your child's doctor is affiliated with a hospital, check with them about available appointments. Sites that offer the Pfizer vaccine include:

- Some NYC-run vaccination sites, including Citi Field (Queens), Martin van Buren (Queens), Teacher's Prep (Brooklyn), and Empire Outlets (Staten Island)
- Hospitals and hospital clinics, including NYC Health + Hospitals acute care hospitals
- Certain Federally Qualified Health Centers and community health centers
- Pharmacies, including select CVS and Walgreens/Duane Reade locations
- New York State vaccination sites, including Javits Center (open to all NYC residents), Bronx - Bay Eden Senior Center (open to all NYC residents), Medgar Evers College (Brooklyn residents only), and York College - Health and Physical Education Complex (Queens residents only)

How should we prepare for an appointment?

Your 16- or 17-year-old will need to bring their vaccine appointment confirmation.

Additional considerations:

1. For minors under the age of 18, a parent or legal guardian must provide consent to vaccination, either in person or by phone at the time of the vaccine appointment. Minors must present identification to verify that they are at least 16 years of age or have a parent present to attest on their behalf.
2. Some vaccination sites may require proof of NYC residency or residency within a certain borough or ZIP code. Learn about acceptable proof residency documentation at nyc.gov/covidvaccine.
3. Everyone must complete the [NYS COVID-19 Vaccine Form](#) in order to get vaccinated.
4. You do **not** need to show proof of immigration status or a social security number. Immigration status does not need to be confirmed when registering for or attending a vaccine appointment.
5. Children with disabilities may be eligible for free transportation to and from vaccination sites. Services are provided courtesy of the Curb app. After booking a vaccination appointment, participants will be screened and directed to Curb's 24/7 call center. The call center helps book the trip by taxi or ambulette service as appropriate.

You or your eligible teen may have additional questions about COVID-19 vaccines. We encourage you to discuss any concerns with your child's primary care provider so you and your child can feel confident about your choice. You can also test answers to frequently asked questions on the NYC Health Department's [COVID-19 vaccine facts page](#). Visit nyc.gov/covidvaccine for more information.

Sincerely,



Daniel H. Stephens, M.D.

Deputy Commissioner, Division of Family and Child Health
NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene