COVID-19 Newsletter (vol. 63)

Center for Disaster Medicine, New York Medical College

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Tuesday, March 16, 2021

During this COVID-19 pandemic and other future events, the CDM has been and will continue to be a source of reliable information, education and models for mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. We hope this informational document has helped provide you filtered and actionable information. As the pace of new information and changes occur, we will evaluate the current once per week to determine if this information should be provided on a more frequent basis.

David Markenson, M.D., M.B.A.
Director
Center for Disaster Medicine

COVID-19 Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Total Deaths</th>
<th>Total Recovered</th>
<th>Total Tested</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worldwide</th>
<th>120,191,417</th>
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<td>41,196,590</td>
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<td>Connecticut</td>
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<td>7,788</td>
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<td>6,697,955</td>
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</table>

Information as of 3/16/21 at 0000 EDT. Source: [https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html](https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html)

**United States COVID-19 Case Map / GIS**

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**Center for Disaster Medicine Updates**

- Delivered All Hazards Disaster Response course to members of different public safety agencies from New York and Connecticut.
- Presented invited lecture regarding COVID-19 response and best practices to graduate students enrolled in Master in Homeland Security degree in Guatemala.
- Coordinating and overseeing COVID-19 screenings at NYMC campus.
- Continue to partner with local agencies such as Westchester Department of Emergency Services to ensure ongoing collaboration with all public safety agencies.
- Coordinating volunteers to support local public health response to COVID-19.
• Conducting research and analysis of current events and COVID-19 response to identify strengths and areas for improvement in other regions.
• Updating and developing new programs to provide enhanced education on public health emergencies including pandemics.
• Exploring course development opportunities in infection prevention and control for frontline responders in the hospital and in the field.
• Serving as a source of information for COVID-19 related concerns or questions regarding public health, emergency medical service (EMS), public safety and healthcare response.
• Local networking and pandemic response analysis for New York’s tri-state area, using first-person experiences to highlight current trends.

To view the Center for Disaster Medicine's newest webinar, please click here - The COVID-19 Vaccine: What to Tell Your Patients

Federal

• The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) expands the language capability of the COVID Coach app to help Spanish speaking Veterans and civilians cope with mental health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. App users can easily switch from English to Spanish, allowing Veterans with limited English proficiency equal access to a variety of practical tools, information and resources to track well-being, mood swings and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an outsized impact on certain communities, with Black, Latino, Native, and Pacific Islander communities experiencing disproportionate rates of infection and death from the virus. Among Veterans, Veterans of color account for 46 percent of all infections while representing only 26 percent of the overall Veteran population. https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5637
• The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, signed into law March 11 by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., equips the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure Veterans have continued access to quality health care and protections against COVID-19, as well as providing needed economic relief. The $1.9 trillion coronavirus economic relief package for Americans allocates $17 billion in support of VA’s nationwide response to the pandemic. https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5639
The White House

The official website of the White House delivers bold action and immediate relief for American families as the country grapples with converging crises. This includes actions to control the COVID-19 pandemic, provide economic relief, tackle climate change, and advance racial equity and civil rights, as well as immediate actions to reform our immigration system and restore America’s standing in the world.

https://www.whitehouse.gov

Health and Human Services (HHS)

The Biden-Harris Administration is reducing health care costs, expanding access to coverage, and ensuring nearly everyone who buys their own individual or family health insurance through a Marketplace can receive a tax credit to reduce their premiums. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) not only provides the resources for America to beat this pandemic, but it also expands access to health insurance coverage, lowers costs, and ensures that health care truly is a right for all Americans.


As part of President Biden’s national strategy to defeat the pandemic, and following his speech on March 11 outlining the Administration’s next steps in the war-time effort to speed COVID-19 vaccinations, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has taken action to expand the pool of qualified professionals able to serve as vaccinators.

https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/03/12/biden-administration-takes-action-through-hhs-increase-number-vaccinators.html

As part of President Biden’s commitment to ensure the nation’s underserved communities and those disproportionately affected by COVID-19 are equitably vaccinated, this week the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is announcing that an additional 700 HRSA-supported health centers will be invited to join the Health Center COVID-19 Vaccine Program. These health centers will have the opportunity to join the program over the next six weeks, increasing the total number of invited health center participants to 950.


For the latest COVID-19 information from HHS

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

View the latest COVID-19 information from NIH
https://www.nih.gov/coronavirus
United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

As of March 12, 2021, 341 tests and sample collection devices are authorized by the FDA under EUAs. These include 254 molecular tests and sample collection devices, 72 antibody and other immune response tests and 15 antigen tests. There are 38 molecular authorizations that can be used with home-collected samples. There is one molecular prescription at-home test, two antigen prescription at-home test, one OTC at-home antigen test and one OTC molecular test.

For the latest overall FDA information about COVID-19.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

CDC releases media statement from CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky, M.D., M.P.H., In Observance of One-Year Pandemic Milestone
https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0311-pandemic-anniversary.html

Although the overall risk of severe illness is low, pregnant people are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 when compared to non-pregnant people.

The CDC is closely monitoring mutations in the virus genome that alter the characteristics and cause the virus to act differently in ways that are significant to public health (e.g., causes more severe disease, spreads more easily between humans, requires different treatments, changes the effectiveness of current vaccines). It’s important to understand that genetic mutations are expected, and some variants can spread and become predominant while others subside.

CDC provides daily data tracker which has maps and charts tracking cases, deaths, and trends of COVID-19 in the United States- updated daily by 8 p.m. ET.
https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home

For the latest CDC information

Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is increasing the Medicare payment amount for administering the COVID-19 vaccine. This new and higher payment rate will support important actions taken by providers that are designed to increase the number of vaccines they can furnish each day, including establishing new or growing existing vaccination sites, conducting patient outreach and education, and hiring additional staff. At a time when vaccine supply is growing, CMS is supporting provider efforts to expand capacity and ensure that all Americans can be vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), issued updated guidance today for nursing homes to safely expand visitation options during the COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency (PHE).
Vaccines

In this section, vaccine-related information from various sources will be collected, reviewed, and tabulated here. As of March 16, 2021, the FDA has granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to Pfizer BioNTech, Moderna and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson. Now with three vaccines with EUA, the goal is to vaccinate a larger number of persons in the coming months throughout the United States. As additional vaccines are granted EUA, information for those vaccines will also be included. The new guidance—which is based on the latest science — includes recommendations for how and when a fully vaccinated individual can visit with other people who are fully vaccinated and with other people who are not vaccinated. This guidance represents a first step toward returning to everyday activities in our communities. CDC will update these recommendations as more people are vaccinated, rates of COVID-19 in the community change, and additional scientific evidence becomes available.

[Link to CDC guidelines]

- CDC provides overall U.S. COVID-19 Vaccine, deliveries and administration, maps, charts, and data updated daily by 8 p.m.. This section represents all vaccine partners including jurisdictional partner clinics, retail pharmacies, long-term care facilities, Federal Emergency Management Agency and Health Resources and Services Administration partner sites, and federal entity facilities.

[Link to CDC data tracker]

CDC created this section regarding the Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen vaccine to provide updated relevant information including side effects and safety data, clinical trials demographic statistics, and information on how the vaccine works.

[Link to CDC Janssen vaccine page]

CDC created this section regarding the Moderna vaccine to provide updated relevant information including side effects and safety data, clinical trials demographic statistics, and information on how the vaccine works.

[Link to CDC Moderna vaccine page]

CDC created this section regarding the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine to provide updated relevant information including side effects and safety data, clinical trials demographic statistics, and information on how the vaccine works.

[Link to CDC Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine page]

HHS created this section to provide the latest information about COVID-19 vaccines.

[Link to HHS vaccines page]

On March 15, 2021, Governor Cuomo updated New Yorkers on the state's vaccination program. 122,778 doses have been administered across New York's vast distribution network in the last 24 hours, and more than 1 million doses have been administered over the past seven days. New York's vast distribution network and large population of eligible
individuals still far exceed the supply coming from the federal government. Due to limited supply, New Yorkers are encouraged to remain patient and are advised not to show up at vaccination sites without an appointment.


On March 15, 2021, Governor Cuomo announced three additional mass vaccination sites will open on Long Island this week. The sites will be located in Brentwood, Old Westbury and Southampton. All three sites will have the ability to vaccinate more than one thousand New Yorkers daily dependent on supply from the federal government. Appointments will be available for booking Wednesday, March 17 at 8:00 a.m.


On March 12, 2021, Governor Cuomo today signed legislation (S.2588-A/A.3354-B) granting public and private employees time off to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Under this new law, employees will be granted up to four hours of excused leave per injection that will not be charged against any other leave the employee has earned or accrued. This legislation becomes effective immediately.


The new NYS DOH COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker Dashboard will update New Yorkers on the distribution of the vaccine including the number of doses received by the state, a breakdown of first or second doses, and the number of persons vaccinated with the first and second doses in each region.

https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/covid-19-vaccine-tracker

NYS DOH releases instructions for New York State-operated vaccination sites

https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/

For NYC DOHMH updated guidance regarding COVID-19 vaccine

https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccines.page

The Vaccine Finder is a one-stop site for New Yorkers to find their nearest COVID-19 vaccination location. The Vaccine Finder can also provide New Yorkers with information to schedule vaccination appointments.

https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov/

Educational Institution Information

- Higher Education
  - Now that the fall is complete and the spring in full swing, eyes have turned to the upcoming semester. A number of colleges and universities, spurred by promising vaccine news and the beginning of admissions season, have announced that they plan to return to “normal” this upcoming fall. In-person classes and residential experiences will be the norm, administrations have said. Some higher education experts are beginning to look ahead to that return, including the possible equity concerns that may arise and how institutions can address them.
Good news about the COVID-19 vaccine couldn’t have come at a better time for college admissions officers. Dozens of colleges and universities have recently announced that they’ll be open in person this fall after waiting weeks or months to go public with fall plans. Colleges’ fall announcements started a few weeks ago as vaccination rates began to pick up, but student inboxes and news sites have been flooded with fall reopening news this month, due in part to the ongoing admissions season. Experts call March and April prime yield season, during which colleges and universities work tirelessly to build a strong incoming class. After a year of exhausting transitions, students are looking for certainty and normalcy, and promising those things could give institutions a leg up as admitted students decide where to enroll.

Clinical Trials

To view the latest information on 4,636 clinical trials regarding COVID-19

American Red Cross


State Updates
New York

- Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and Governor Phil Murphy announced that New York City and New Jersey will expand indoor dining capacity to 50 percent beginning March 19. Currently, New York City and New Jersey restaurants are operating at 35 percent capacity and the rest of New York State is operating at 50 percent capacity. This follows Governor Cuomo's announcement that restaurants outside of New York City will expand to 75 percent capacity beginning March 19. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-and-governor-murphy-announce-indoor-dining-new-york-city-and-new-jersey-will](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-and-governor-murphy-announce-indoor-dining-new-york-city-and-new-jersey-will)

- Governor Cuomo announced that domestic travelers will no longer be required to quarantine after entering New York from another U.S. State or U.S. Territory starting April 1. While no longer required, the NYS Department of Health still recommends quarantine after domestic travel as an added precaution. Mandatory quarantine remains in effect for international travelers. All travelers must continue to fill out the Traveler Health Form. Individuals should continue strict adherence to all safety guidelines to stop the spread - wearing masks, socially distancing and avoiding gatherings. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-quarantine-domestic-travel-will-no-longer-be-required-starting-april](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-quarantine-domestic-travel-will-no-longer-be-required-starting-april)

- Governor Cuomo announced an expansion of the New York Forward Rapid Test Program to help businesses and catered events safely reopen, with 26 sites opening within the next week for a total of 38 sites statewide. This unique public-private partnership—first announced in the Governor's 2021 State of the State and launched last month—makes low-cost rapid testing available to the public to support enhanced economic activity as the State continues to reopen sectors of the economy, including weddings and catered events on March 15 and event, arts and entertainment venues on April 2. To find participants in this initiative and to make an appointment, visit the program website. [https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-expansion-new-york-forward-rapid-test-program-help-businesses-venues](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-expansion-new-york-forward-rapid-test-program-help-businesses-venues)

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- Governor Cuomo today announced that wedding receptions and catered events can now resume statewide. All venues hosting weddings and catered events must follow the State’s strict health and safety protocols, including the following requirements:
  - Venues are restricted to 50 percent capacity, with no more than 150 attendees per event
  - All attendees must have proof of recent negative test result or proof of immunization prior to the event
  - Sign-in with contact information required to assist with potential contact tracing
  - Venues must notify local health departments of large events, above the social gathering limit, in advance
  - Masks will be required at all times except when seated and eating or drinking
  - Ceremonial and socially-distanced dancing allowed in designated areas
**New York State Department of Health (DOH)**

Governor Cuomo announced that, as of March 15, 2021, wedding receptions and catered events can now resume statewide. All venues hosting weddings and catered events must follow the State's strict health and safety protocols.


On March 15, 2021, Governor Cuomo updated New Yorkers on the state’s progress during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to note that data, including test results and hospital rates, reported early in the week are often not completely reflective of the current situation due to lower discharges and testing volume over the weekend. Data trends over a period of time, such as using 7-day averages, are a preferred metric.


For a list of positive cases by county in New York State


NYS DOH has created a dynamic COVID-19 Tracker which provides COVID-19 information regarding testing, cases, percentages, and fatalities across New York State. It also breaks down cases by county.


For the latest COVID-19 information from NYS DOH


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**New Jersey**

- Governor Phil Murphy signed Executive Order No. 230, which will increase indoor capacity limits for certain businesses and increase both the general indoor and outdoor gathering limit. [https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-230.pdf](https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-230.pdf)

**Connecticut**
• Governor Ned Lamont announced that he has signed an executive order modifying certain state laws in order to allow expanded access to telehealth services to continue in Connecticut during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Telehealth services are those that enable healthcare providers to interact with patients, including those with Medicaid coverage, without needing to meet in person by using electronic methods, such as video conferencing and telephones, and thus supporting adequate social distancing measures. https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/03-2021/Governor-Lamont-Signs-Order-Enabling-Expanded-Use-of-Telehealth-Services-To-Continue

• Governor Lamont announced that he is accelerating Connecticut’s age-based rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine to proceed on a quicker schedule than was originally anticipated when it was announced last month. The revised schedule, which tentatively plans for the vaccine to expand to all adults over the age of 16 by April 5, comes as the state was informed by the Biden administration that it should anticipate receiving a significant increase in supplies of all three federally authorized vaccines over the next several weeks. Connecticut continues to rank among the top five states in the nation in the percentage of population that has been vaccinated. https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/03-2021/Governor-Lamont-Announces-Accelerated-Schedule-To-Provide-COVID-19-Vaccines

• Governor Lamont, members of Connecticut’s Congressional delegation, and Connecticut Housing Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno today announced the launch of UniteCT, a new state program to provide rental and utility assistance to qualified Connecticut households financially impacted by COVID-19. As further detailed in the program guidelines, UniteCT may provide up to $10,000 in rental assistance and up to $1,500 in electric utility arrearage payments to landlords and utility companies on behalf of approved tenants. Tenants and landlords will be able to complete and track applications online from any computer or smart phone. Assistance will be available through a call center and at housing counseling agencies and other community partners across the state. https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/03-2021/Governor-Lamont-and-Congressional-Delegation-Announce-Launch-of-UniteCT
Local Updates

New York Blood Center (NYBC)

For the latest updated NYBC information about COVID-19:
https://nybc.org/covid-19/

New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)

For NYC DOHMH updated COVID-19 data page
https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page

For the latest COVID-19 information from NYC DOHMH
https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page

Westchester County Department of Health

For the latest breakdown of positive cases in Westchester County as of March 14, 2021
https://wgcis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/280339d96db14efd9cc304dba0f3a71d
For the latest COVID-19 information in Westchester including how to avoid the latest vaccine scams offering earlier access to vaccines.

**Putnam County Department of Health**

Breakdown of positive cases by towns in Putnam County as of March 15, 2021

For the latest COVID-19 information
https://www.putnamcountyny.com/health/coronavirus/

**Dutchess County Department of Health**

Breakdown of positive cases in Dutchess County as of March 15, 2021

For the latest COVID-19 information:

**Orange County Department of Health**

Updated COVID-19 dashboard for Orange County, NY as of March 15, 2021
https://ocnygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/21de1fb5ce0c480f95dc0cf2b8b83b71

For the latest COVID-19 information

**Rockland County Department of Health**

Review Rockland County’s dashboard with the latest COVID-19 information regarding cases as of March 13, 2021

For the latest COVID-19 information

**Healthcare**

The Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Inspector General, and the FBI Criminal Investigative Division, in coordination with the FBI’s Office of Private Sector, prepared a Liaison Information Report to inform health care providers and public health entities about several reported incidents involving fake COVID-19 vaccination records. The report recommends that vaccine administrators do not share blank vaccine cards with individuals who have not received a vaccine, and that health care professionals discourage individuals from sharing photos or copies of vaccine cards, particularly on social media. The report stresses the importance of continuing to follow CDC guidance regarding social distancing and the use of personal protective equipment.
For the latest COVID-19 information for healthcare facilities from the Greater New York Hospital Association that covers hospitals in the tri-state area.

https://www.gnyha.org/

Center for Disaster Medicine Media

**Faculty News:**
Teens more likely to catch the coronavirus than older adults, according to a study that included Utah kids
The Salty Lake Tribune
3/10/2021
https://www.sltrib.com/news/2021/03/10/teens-more-likely-catch/
Barbara T. Rumain, Ph.D., adjunct associate professor of pediatrics

Why student COVID rates may keep protocols in place
University Business
3/11/2021
Barbara T. Rumain, Ph.D., adjunct associate professor of pediatrics
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This newsletter is for informational purposes only; it does not constitute medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

New York Medical College
Center for Disaster Medicine
7 Dana Road Suite 511
Valhalla, New York 10595
914-594-1750
https://www.nymc.edu/center-for-disaster-medicine/