



ALBEMARLE REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES
Partners in Public Health

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ALBEMARLE REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES PREPARES TO RECEIVE DOSES OF COVID -19 VACCINE

Elizabeth City, NC - Albemarle Regional Health Services (ARHS) is collaborating with local hospital partners Sentara Albemarle Medical Center and Vidant Health to prepare for the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to arrive in the region. While supplies may be limited at first, immunizations are a tried and true public health strategy for disease prevention. Therefore, a targeted approach focusing on those at highest risk will be implemented to begin this vaccination campaign. The CDC and NCDHHS have outlined the phases listed below for this campaign strategy:

Phase 1a

- Health care workers at high risk for exposure to COVID-19 - doctors, nurses, and all who interact and care for patients with COVID-19, including those who clean areas used by patients, and those giving vaccines to these workers.
- Long-Term Care staff and residents— people in skilled nursing facilities and in adult, family and group homes.

Phase 1b.

- Adults with two or more chronic conditions that put them at risk of severe illness as defined by the CDC, including conditions like cancer, COPD, serious heart conditions, sickle cell disease and Type 2 diabetes, among others.
- Adults at high risk of exposure including essential frontline workers (police, food processing, teachers, childcare), health care workers, and those living in prisons, homeless shelters, migrant and fishery housing with 2+ chronic conditions.
- Those working in prisons, jails and homeless shelters (no chronic conditions requirement).

Phase 2

- Essential frontline workers, health care workers, and those living in prisons, homeless shelters or migrant and fishery housing.
- Adults 65
- Adults under 65 with one chronic condition that puts them at risk of severe illness as defined by the CDC.

Phase 3

- College and university students.
- K-12 students when there is an approved vaccine for children.
- Those employed in jobs that are critical to society and at lower risk of exposure.

Phase 4

- Everyone who wants a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccination

“ARHS has received word from the state that, upon FDA approval of the Moderna vaccine, we are scheduled to receive approximately 4,000 doses in our eight-county region that will be allotted for Phase 1A as early as next week, the week of December 21,” said R. Battle Betts, Jr., MPA, ARHS Health Director.

The COVID-19 vaccines are completely safe and effective in preventing COVID-19. More than 70,000 people volunteered in clinical trials for two vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) to see if they are safe and work to prevent COVID illness. To date, the vaccines are 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 with no safety concerns. Temporary side effects like sore arms, tiredness, and feeling off for a day or two after receiving the vaccine have been reported. These temporary reactions were more common after the second vaccine dose.

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The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines require two shots a set number of days apart. You need two doses to build up strong immunity against COVID. The second shot will come about 3-4 weeks after the first. It is important to get two doses of the same vaccine. There will be no cost to receive the vaccine.

ARHS and our partners have been gearing up for potential pandemic and mass vaccinations for many years. As this plan has taken shape, ARHS has participated in several exercises and drills with local partners that provides infrastructure and coordination across the region. This comprehensive plan is responsible for emergency preparedness, planning, operational coordination, and resource allocation at all stages. With guidance from NCDHHS and CDC, ARHS is prepared to focus on the logistics required to receive and administer vaccines to prioritized populations.

“It is the goal of ARHS and our partners to ensure that all individuals who need and desire the COVID-19 vaccine have access to it across the region,” states Betts. “The best way to fight COVID-19 is to first start with vaccinations for those most at-risk, then reach more people as the vaccine supply increases in 2021. Everyone should continue using the 3 Ws—wearing a mask, waiting 6 feet apart, washing your hands, and limiting gatherings. Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and following the 3 Ws is everyone’s best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.”

ARHS is continuing to ask our community citizens to be mindful in practicing preventive and safety measures.

These precautions include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Practice social distancing; stay at least six feet away from others, avoid unnecessary travel, avoid handshakes, hugs and other close contact.
- Wear a cloth face covering in public when social distancing measures are hard to maintain.

For more information about COVID-19, visit these sites:

Albemarle Regional Health Services - <http://www.arhs-nc.org/> or call **252-338-WELL**

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services - <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/>

Center for Disease Control - <https://www.cdc.gov/>

For more information, please contact Amy Underhill, at 252-338-4448 or aunderhill@arhs-nc.org.

Albemarle Regional Health Services is dedicated to disease prevention and the promotion of a healthy environment to reduce morbidity, mortality, and disability through quality service, education, and advocacy.

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