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March 12, 2021

## Governor Scott announces new gathering guidelines for unvaccinated households

Governor Phil Scott announced Friday new gathering guidance for people who are not vaccinated: Two unvaccinated people or households can now gather at a time.

“You’re not limited to choose just one other household,” Scott said. “You can do so with multiple households, as long as it’s just one at any given time.”

People who are vaccinated “don’t count against the limit,” he said, and kids can have playdates again.

Gov. Scott also announced restaurants now will be able to seat six people at a table and they can be from different families.

“I know these changes are not as big as many other states have announced, including those in our region,” he said. “But we feel they’re positive and safe steps forward and you can expect another spigot turn next week.”

Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD, reiterated that anyone who gathers with others who is not vaccinated still needs to follow guidance to prevent the spread of the virus — wearing masks and keeping at least a 6-foot distance.

“Remember how well we did with this last summer and early fall, before that first surge in cases. As Vermonters, we were able to live our lives while still taking those necessary steps to protect one another,” Dr. Levine said. “I know we can do that again, especially with our progress in vaccination. But this virus has not gone away. We are still seeing cases of COVID-19, and we know we are now dealing with a more transmissible variant.

He urged Vermonters to continue to [keep any gathering as safe as possible](#) by:

- Staying outside when you can
- Choosing activities where you can keep masks on and maintain your distance.
- Thinking about where you’ve been recently and whether it could put others at risk, especially if someone is at higher risk.
- Having the “COVID talk”: negotiate boundaries with others and establish expectations before you get together.
- And always avoiding any gathering if you have symptoms of illness.

**Read the press release**

## Wondering what you can do now that you're vaccinated?

The CDC's new guidance for vaccinated people reflects Vermont protocols.

Dr. Levine welcomed [new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control](#) for people who have been fully vaccinated.

"I was happy to see it really shows Vermont is once again ahead of the curve when it comes to deliberate easing of guidelines, while still maintaining important protections like mask protocols," Dr. Levine said.

The guidance includes:

- You can gather indoors with fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask or staying 6 feet apart.
- You can gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household (for example, visiting with relatives who all live together) without masks, unless any of those people or anyone they live with has an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- If you've been around someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay away from others or get tested or quarantine unless you have symptoms (with some exceptions).

Vaccinated people should still take steps to protect yourself and others in many situations, like wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet apart from others, and avoiding crowds whenever you are:

- In public
- Gathering with unvaccinated people from more than one other household
- Visiting with an unvaccinated person who is at increased risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 or who lives with a person at increased risk

Find a summary of guidance around prevention, gathering, travel and close contacts on our website.

**Find out what you can do**

## Vaccine appointments for Vermonters age 16+ with high-risk health conditions

More than 8,100 Vermonters age 16 to 54 with high-risk health conditions signed up for COVID-19 vaccine appointments through the state's registration system Thursday, the first day this latest group became eligible.

This group was initially slated to become eligible on March 15, but the timeline was moved up due to the state's supply of vaccine and ability to accommodate large numbers of appointments, said Human Services Secretary Mike Smith.

Visit [healthvermont.gov/MyVaccine](https://healthvermont.gov/MyVaccine) to make an appointment for yourself or someone in your care. You'll also find videos and other information to help you prepare to make your appointment. If registering online is not an option, you can make an appointment by calling (855) 722-7878.

*Please note: You do NOT need a doctor's note or proof of a health condition to sign up. You will be asked for information about a health care provider you see for your condition, but you can still make an appointment if you do not have a health care provider.*

High-risk health conditions include:

- Current cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis
- Heart disease
- Immunocompromised / Weakened immune system
- Severe obesity (BMI of 40 or more)
- Pregnancy
- Diabetes (Types 1 & 2)
- Disabilities, including chromosomal disorders, intellectual disabilities, and disabilities that affect lung function
- Sickle cell disease

### Register with the Health Department

## Health Department clinics planned for BIPOC Vermonters

Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD, on Tuesday outlined plans to vaccinate Vermonters who are Black, Indigenous and people of color.

“Our data shows that BIPOC Vermonters are more likely to get COVID-19 compared to white non-Hispanic Vermonters,” he said. “They have significantly higher hospitalization rates and rates of most chronic diseases, often related to issues of higher exposures to COVID due to types of employment and transportation issues.”

We are also seeing significant disparities in the [rate of vaccination](#) among BIPOC Vermonters compared to white non-Hispanic Vermonters, he said.

“We can and must do better, not only in engagement, the building of trust, and reducing vaccine hesitancy, but in realizing better health outcomes,” Dr. Levine said.

Over the past month, the Health Department has been holding vaccine clinics for eligible Vermonters and members of their household who are among the groups at higher risk for COVID-19 due to language barriers, such as English Language Learners.

Beginning next week and over the ensuing weeks, we plan to continue and extend that strategy to other BIPOC communities where an eligible Vermonter (who meets the age category, for example) may also bring other household members to be vaccinated, Dr. Levine said. This will be statewide and not only Chittenden county, from our southern border to mid-state farm workers to indigenous Vermonters in the northern part of the state.

Clinics will be arranged in coordination and with the support of community partners around the state. As we establish clinic locations, we will post information on our website.

**Visit our website**

## **New COVID-19 vaccine video in multiple languages**

A new Health Department video, [Sara Asks](#), was inspired by community education sessions held with our partners to answer some commonly asked questions around the COVID-19 vaccine. This first video centers on pregnancy, breastfeeding, and fertility questions.

It is available in English, Arabic and Nepali, with more languages coming soon. The videos (and other resources) can be found on our [Multilingual Resources web page](#).

**Find multilingual resources**

## **B.1.1.7 variant detected in Vermont**

Vermont health officials have confirmed detection of the COVID-19 variant B.1.1.7 – the viral mutation first detected in the U.K. in the fall of 2020. This is the first lab-confirmed evidence of the variant in the state.

Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD said detecting the variant in Vermont was not unexpected, as it has already been found in nearly all other states in the U.S.

Dr. Levine said, however, that because this variant is a type that can spread more quickly “it is ever more important that everyone follow our guidance to prevent transmission, to take advantage of the statewide opportunities to get tested, and to get vaccinated as soon as you are eligible. These steps continue to be effective against variants.”

The variant was detected in a specimen taken from a resident of Chittenden County. The Health Department sends select samples from people who had already tested positive for COVID-19 to the Massachusetts Public Health Laboratory, Molecular Diagnostics and Virology program for genetic sequencing.

**Read the press release**

## **Vaccine dashboard update - new look, more detail**

Our [COVID-19 vaccine dashboard](#) has a new look and more detailed data for Vermonters! On the main summary page, you can now find race/ethnicity data by county. Click the “Show race detail button,” and just hover over a percentage on the table or click on a county on the map to get the data.

You can also click the button to see data “By Age, Sex, Race and Ethnicity” to see detailed statewide data. Also newly added is race/ethnicity by two age groups (16-64 and 65+). You can also filter age and sex by county or counties.

The dashboard includes the number of doses received, total people started, total people completed, percentage of overall progress and percentage completed. Data includes the vaccines available in Vermont (currently, Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson). More detailed definitions are listed in notes below the dashboard.

**View the COVID-19 vaccine dashboard**

## Additional resources about vaccination & more

- Find answers to your questions about the COVID-19 vaccine from the CDC: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html).
- Get Vermont-specific information in our [Frequently Asked Questions](#).
- Sign up for the [COVID-19 Weekly Email Update](#).
- Find information sheets, posters and toolkits, as well as translated materials on our [Resources web page](#).

**Visit the Resources webpage**

## Take care of your emotional and mental health

If you or someone you know is in crisis or needs emotional support, help is available 24/7:

- Call your [local mental health crisis line](#).
- Text VT to 741741 to talk with someone at the [Crisis Text Line](#).
- Call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-273-8255. For more info, visit [healthvermont.gov/suicide](https://healthvermont.gov/suicide).
- Get connected to Alcohol and Drug Support Services at [VT Helplink](#).
- Get self-help tips and connect to mental health services at [COVID Support VT](#).

**Read more on coping with stress**

## New on healthvermont.gov

About 20% of outbreak-associated cases are attributed to workplaces. On average, there are 5 or fewer cases associated with an outbreak in a workplace, and nearly all of the cases associated with workplace outbreaks were among staff only.

Learn more about workplace outbreaks in the latest [Weekly Data Summary Spotlight](#).

As of 12:00pm on Thursday, March 11, 2021:

- 138,738 Vermonters have received a least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.



- 73,754 Vermonters have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

See the latest vaccine data on the [COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

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Vermont Department of Health | 802-863-7240 | [HealthVermont.gov](https://www.healthvermont.gov)  
[AHS.VDHPublicCommunication@vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.VDHPublicCommunication@vermont.gov)

