



COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION

BE INFORMED SO YOU CAN MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION
FOR YOURSELF AND THE PEOPLE YOU SUPPORT

January 7, 2021

Dear Lexington Staff members,

In late December, in response to fierce advocacy efforts by our organizations, New York State announced that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) living in our homes are among the state's most vulnerable, and they, along with the staff who support them (that's you), will be included in the Priority 1A phase of the COVID-19 vaccination plan.

In one way or another, we have all been affected by COVID-19, either personally or because people we support and work with have been affected. People with certain underlying health conditions, which most of the people we support have, often have worse outcomes. However, people of all ages and in good health are still becoming very ill; others, with or without health issues, are suffering from mild illness and fully recovering. Some people who have had mild or severe symptoms can become so-called long-haulers, experiencing neurological and other effects for months after becoming infected, with no end in sight.

At Lexington, 69 people we support and 96 employees have become positive for COVID-19. Hundreds of others have had to endure quarantine and anxiety because of being exposed. Twenty-three of our homes have had to experience being in quarantine. Very tragically, we have lost 5 members of our Lexington family and several others have had to endure hospitalization. This does not include the family members of our employees who have been affected. The most frustrating part of this is, no matter what we do, the numbers just keep rising, almost by the hour.

The one thing that is clear is that there is no way to know who will get very sick and who will not. The COVID-19 virus is highly contagious and the course of illness is unpredictable. Protecting oneself and those around you from this disease is very important.

With the recent FDA vaccines authorized for emergency use, protection is at hand and hundreds of thousands of medical and other healthcare professionals across the country have lined up to get their shots. Below you will find information regarding the vaccine. It is essential that you become knowledgeable about the current vaccines so that you can make a decision for yourself.

We are encouraging all of our employees and people we support to take the vaccine and are scheduling appointments in all three counties in the following ways:

1. Appointments for staff at hospitals are currently underway - St. Mary's, Nathan Littauer, Cobleskill Regional and Albany Medical Center. Over 250 of our staff have already been vaccinated.
2. Clinics conducted by CVS have been set up at 13 of our high-risk homes. These will primarily be used for people we support and the staff who work at those sites. We may be able to include other homes that are close to these locations.
3. Public Health departments in Schoharie and Fulton Counties have offered to vaccinate people we support and our employees either directly or through our nurses. We will be announcing these plans as soon as they are finalized.
4. Finally, Lexington has been approved to offer vaccination just like we do for the flu vaccine. However, we have to wait until we are considered a priority to receive these vaccines.

Our goal is to vaccinate everyone at Lexington. We are following a priority order that has been determined by New York State. At this time our priorities include:

1. Everyone who lives in one of our IRAs
2. Any employee who works in the homes or has any type of regular contact with the people who live in our IRAs.
3. Any employee who has regular contact with people who receive non-site based day services (such as, day hab, com hab, respite, and employment), self-direction, and Lexington clinic services.
4. Also included are employees in quality assurance, investigations, administration, janitorial, maintenance, reception, training and food service, who have contact with people we support who receive services in these programs.

Whether you are in the current priority list or not, if you are interested in receiving the vaccine, please complete the form at this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QYGTLFW>
We will contact you as soon as your priority level becomes authorized and we have an appointment available.

I hope you will strongly consider being vaccinated. As you know, Dr. Kevin Cope, one of our Medical Directors, has already been vaccinated and is very much in favor of the COVID-19 vaccines in order to reduce the risk of the virus to the people Lexington supports, as well as to you and your own families. You can hear him speak about it at this link: <https://youtu.be/WudHox2oEVO>

As always, thank you for the incredible job you do every day supporting people at Lexington. We couldn't do it without you! Please consider vaccination as a proactive step you can take to help ensure the safety of you, your family, and everyone who Lexington supports.

Gratefully,

Shaloni

LEXINGTON EMPLOYEES BEING VACCINATED FOR COVID-19
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE GOING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

Aimee Hinderlighter, an LPN at one of Lexington’s Mountainview Homes, is seen here receiving her first shot of the COVID-19 vaccine at St. Mary’s Hospital last week. “At our Mountainview Homes, we support some of the most medically fragile people at Lexington,” said Aimee. “Although we have strict protocols and preventative measures in place that include proper PPE, hand washing and social distancing measures, it’s not possible to stay 6-feet away from people when you are directly supporting them. The vaccine will not only protect me but also the people we support and our co-workers, as well as our own family members. I am excited to take this step forward in our war against COVID-19.”



The vaccine offered through the hospitals and the County Health Departments is from Moderna. This is a vaccine for which the second dose is scheduled in four weeks. CVS is offering the Pfizer vaccine, where the second dose is given three weeks after the first. Information on each vaccine can be found at the following links: <https://tinyurl.com/yjkkxawh> (Moderna) and <https://tinyurl.com/yuz5efzt> (Pfizer).

We want you to have the information you need to make a sound decision regarding being vaccinated for COVID-19. Here is a link to frequently asked questions put together by The Arc NY: <https://tinyurl.com/y3fauxfr> and to screening questions you will be asked before being administered the vaccine: <https://tinyurl.com/y5j5aknz>

Vaccine: Prioritization Phases	
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare workers in patient care settings Long-term care facility workers Most at-risk long-term care facility residents
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First responders (fire, police, national guard) Teachers/school staff, childcare providers Public Health workers Other essential frontline workers that regularly interact with public Other long-term care residents and those living in other congregate settings Individuals in general population deemed particularly high risk due to comorbidities and health conditions
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals over 65 Individuals under 65 with high-risk comorbidities and health conditions
Phase 4	All other essential workers
Phase 5	Healthy adults and children

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL

We encourage you to go to the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov) for vital vaccine information. The contents of some of the CDC communications are below and will assist you in ascertaining the facts.

Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine: <https://tinyurl.com/y8hzuuhw>
 Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits/facts.html>
 Finding Credible Vaccine Information: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/evalwebs.htm>

If you have any questions about Lexington’s COVID-19 Vaccine Program, please contact any one of Lexington’s RNs.

Now that there are authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines in the United States, accurate vaccine information is critical.

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines will not give you COVID-19

None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development or in use in the United States contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. There are several different types of vaccines in development. However, the goal for each of them is to teach our immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this process can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity.

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines will not cause you to test positive on COVID-19 viral tests

Neither the recently authorized and recommended vaccines nor the other COVID-19 vaccines currently in clinical trials in the United States cause you to test positive on viral tests, which are used to see if you have a current infection.

If your body develops an immune response, which is the goal of vaccination, there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests indicate you had a previous infection and that you may have some level of protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

FACT: People who have gotten sick with COVID-19 may still benefit from getting vaccinated

Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, people may be advised to get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they have been sick with COVID-19 before.

At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long.

We won't know how long immunity produced by a vaccination lasts until we have more data on how well it works.

Both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity are important aspects of COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about, and the CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

FACT: Getting vaccinated can help prevent getting sick with COVID-19

While many people with COVID-19 have only a mild illness, others may get a severe illness or they may even die. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you, even if you are not at increased risk of severe complications. If you get sick, you also may spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you while you are sick. COVID-19 vaccination helps protect you by creating an antibody response without having to experience sickness.

FACT: Receiving an mRNA vaccine will not alter your DNA

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are mRNA vaccines. mRNA stands for messenger ribonucleic acid and can most easily be described as instructions for how to make a protein or even just a piece of a protein. mRNA is not able to alter or modify a person's genetic makeup (DNA). The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept. This means the mRNA does not affect or interact with our DNA in any way. Instead, COVID-19 vaccines that use mRNA work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop protection (immunity) to disease.

STAY INFORMED & UPDATED

During a crisis such as this, timely communication takes on an even more important role. We have developed a specific group for COVID-19 related communication on Workplace. Please be sure to sign on to Workplace each day and check for new updates. If you're not on Workplace, please contact Courtney Mickels in HR at (518) 295-8130 or mickelc@thearclexington.org.



All the links in this communication will be archived at the following link:
<https://thearclexington.org/vaccine>
