The Governor's accelerateSC task force has launched accelerate.sc.gov, South Carolina's one-stop-shop for COVID-19 response information.

South Carolinians Aged 70 and Older Can Schedule COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments Beginning Jan. 13

January 11, 2021

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Governor Henry McMaster and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) announced that **beginning Wednesday, Jan. 13, any South Carolina resident aged 70 or older, regardless of health status or preexisting conditions, can begin scheduling their appointment to receive COVID-19 vaccine.**

Based on COVID-19 vaccine data — doses received, administered, and appointments scheduled — South Carolina officials are confident the majority of people in Phase 1a who want to be vaccinated have either received their shots or have scheduled appointments to do so. There are currently 146,500 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in the state, with 82,266 total doses already administered (a 56 percent utilization rate) plus 94,926 appointments scheduled by Phase 1a individuals to receive their vaccine over the next several weeks.

Additional steps to expedite access to additional South Carolinians will be made based on the use of the vaccine, the number of appointments made, and information on vaccine supply.

"Because we've seen a dramatic acceleration in vaccine usage and appointments in the last week, we have decided to speed things up again," **said Gov. Henry McMaster.** "We know that those 70 and older are at the greatest risk of dying from COVID-19. Making sure they have expedited access to the vaccine will help save lives."

"While COVID-19 vaccine is currently limited in South Carolina, like it is in all states, our providers continue to receive ongoing weekly shipments of vaccine from the federal government," **said Dr. Brannon Traxler, DHEC Interim Director of Public Health.** "When evaluating supply versus demand and as the rate of vaccines coming into the state increases compared to the rate of appointments being scheduled, we believe it is appropriate to begin scheduling appointments for additional South Carolinians. Based on current data, the mortality rate from COVID-19 for those 70 and older in South Carolina is approximately 655 deaths per 100,000 individuals. For those under the age of 70, there are approximately 37 COVID-19 deaths per 100,000 individuals. This is a staggering comparison and illustrates why vaccinating this population next is critically important in our mission to save lives."

More than 67 percent of COVID-19 deaths in South Carolina have been among those 70 and older.

It's estimated there are roughly 627,800 South Carolinians aged 70 or older in South Carolina, with many already receiving their vaccine through other Phase 1a eligibility.

What to Know

- Beginning Wednesday, Jan. 13, any South Carolina resident who's at least 70 years old can schedule their appointment for receiving vaccine

- Vaccine can only be administered by appointment – you can't walk into a health care facility and ask for vaccine
- Residents will be asked to provide a driver's license or other form of ID at their appointment that confirms their age and, therefore, their eligibility to receive vaccine
- Individuals eligible to receive vaccine can **schedule an appointment using this online resource or by calling the DHEC Care Line at 1-855-472-3432** which currently includes several major hospitals, seven DHEC sites, a DHEC mobile clinic, and 12 Doctor's Cares locations. An additional 50 locations will be added to this list and available to provide vaccine by the beginning of next week.
- As long-term care facility residents and staff continue to receive their Moderna vaccine through the federal Long-Term Care program, the state can soon redirect some Moderna vaccine from that program and make it available to others
- South Carolina is committed to making the limited supply of COVID-19 available to rural and unserved communities who have residents currently eligible to receive vaccine. This is occurring through:
    - an increased number of DHEC mobile clinic locations, where DHEC can bring the vaccine to communities without nearby locations offering vaccine
    - working with the South Carolina Vaccine Advisory Committee, Office of Rural Health, Office of Minority Affairs, South Carolina Hospital Association, South Carolina Medical Association, and other state and local partners to establish vaccine provider locations to rural and underserved communities
    - continuing to educate and inform rural, minority, and non-White communities about the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccine
- The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine requires two shots separated by 21 days. The Moderna vaccine requires two shots separated by 28 days. You need to receive both shots of the same product; vaccine brands are not interchangeable.
- Both shots are needed for complete protection against COVID-19. After receiving both shots, the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are 94-95 percent effective in preventing disease.
- Individuals will receive a vaccine card after receiving their first shot, reminding them when their second shot is due. Most providers are also issuing second-dose appointment reminders to patients by way of phone calls, emails or text messages.
- Getting vaccinated is one of many steps you can take to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. Protection from COVID-19 is critically important because for some people, it can cause severe illness or death.
- **Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available**. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like masks and physical distancing, help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others.

As the worldwide pandemic and vaccine distribution continue to be quickly evolving situations, South Carolinians are reminded to stay updated by following trusted, verified sources for the latest information. DHEC continues to hold at least twice-weekly updates to our state's media outlets as part of ongoing efforts to provide the most current information available. For the latest COVID-19 vaccine information, visit **scdhec.gov/vaxfacts.**

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