

Nursing Facility and Rest Homes: Vaccination Options for Residents and Staff & Visitation Frequently Asked Questions

Updated as of April 20, 2021

To date, many Nursing Facility and Rest Home residents and staff have received both their first and second doses through the Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program (FPPP). The program ended in early April after completing three vaccine clinics at all long-term care facilities. DPH has issued [guidance](#) providing recommendations to long-term care facilities for obtaining COVID-19 vaccine for residents and staff in the weeks and months ahead.

The below FAQs aim to provide guidance for family members with questions about how vaccination impacts visiting their loved ones, their loved one's care, and how the Commonwealth is working to provide vaccination for any residents or staff who are not yet fully vaccinated.

We understand there are many general questions surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine's safety, plan for equitable access, post-vaccine administration guidance, and other health and safety questions. Answers to these general questions and more, can be found on the [COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions](#) webpage.

Can I visit my loved one's room if they are vaccinated?

State guidance allows visitation in your vaccinated loved one's room if your loved one has a private room and if you are also fully vaccinated. If your loved one has a roommate, the roommate must also be fully vaccinated. If you are not yet fully vaccinated, you should continue to visit your loved one either outdoors or in a designated visitation space indoors. Fully vaccinated means being 14 days or more from receiving the second dose in the vaccination series. For more information on visiting your vaccinated loved one, visit the Department of Public Health's long-term care facility visitation guidance found here: [Limitation on Visitors in Long-Term Care Facilities during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) .

Do I have to schedule a visit to see my vaccinated loved one, or can I come by any time?

State guidance no longer requires long-term care facilities to schedule all resident visits. You should continue to discuss visitation with your loved one's facility to learn more about any specific guidelines they have.

Do I have to show my vaccination card when I go to visit?

No, long-term care facilities are not allowed to require that visitors show proof of vaccination during a visit.

I do not want to/cannot get the COVID-19 vaccine. Am I able to visit my loved one in their room if they are vaccinated?

Currently, state guidance only allows for in-room visitation when both the resident and visitor, and resident's roommate, if applicable, are fully vaccinated. However, you can still have indoor visits with your loved one in a designated space or visit your loved one outdoors.

Do I have to be vaccinated to have a compassionate care visit with my loved one in their room?

No. Compassionate care visits may occur in a loved one's room regardless of vaccination status.

Can children visit?

Visits with children must follow the same guidelines as adults-- if the child is not vaccinated, the visit should occur outdoors or in a designated visitation space indoors.

Do I have to wear full personal protective equipment (PPE) such as eye covering, gown, etc. when I go visit my loved one in their room?

You do not need to wear full PPE when you visit your loved one, whether in their room (if you are both fully vaccinated) or in a designated visitation space. However, you must continue to wear a face mask and practice hand hygiene.

Can I take my fully vaccinated loved one out of the facility?

Plans to take your loved one out of the facility should be discussed with the facility or residence in order to understand how to reduce the risk of any exposure and make sure their time away from the facility and return is as safe as possible. These steps include limiting interaction to the fewest number of people and households as possible while the resident is on their planned leave.

Residents who are fully vaccinated and their loved ones should continue to wear a face covering or facemask, stay at least 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds, and clean their hands often.

Residents who are not fully vaccinated must adhere to quarantine requirements upon return to the facility. Residents who have recovered within the last six months and those that are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine upon return.

My loved one's facility has more restrictive visitor policies than what I have seen in the state guidance. Is there anyone I can talk to about this?

If you have questions about the state's guidance or feel as though your loved one's facility is not adhering to the guidance, please contact the state's Nursing Home Family Resource Line at 617-660-5399

Can I take my fully vaccinated loved one out of the facility if they are required to quarantine due to close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual?

Residents who are being quarantined due to close contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive should delay any planned activities outside of their facility until their quarantine ends so that they reduce the risk of transmission to anyone.

Is the state requiring all long-term care staff get vaccinated?

Long-term care staff are not required by the state to get the COVID-19 vaccine. DPH does strongly encourage all eligible persons, including long-term care staff get vaccinated as soon as they can.

What vaccination options are available for current residents and staff at long-term care facilities that have not yet received the vaccine or are only partially vaccinated (including through the Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program that has ended)?

The facility may contact their long-term care pharmacy partner to provide the necessary COVID-19 vaccine to the long-term care facility. The facility will then administer dose(s) for the resident. Additional information can be found in DPH Guidance: [Vaccination of Long-term Care Residents and Staff following the Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program](#).

Where can unvaccinated staff get the vaccine?

Facilities may contact their long-term care pharmacy partner to provide the necessary COVID-19 vaccine to staff as well as residents. Long-term care staff may also make an appointment at one of the mass vaccination sites, retail pharmacy locations or regional vaccination sites. They can schedule an appointment at a site near them at mass.gov/COVIDVaccine or call 2-1-1 if unable to use the internet to schedule an appointment.

If a resident receives their first dose at a facility and is discharged before receiving their second dose, may the resident return to the facility to receive a second dose?

Facilities may allow for a discharged resident to return to the facility to receive a second dose, however it is not required.

However, it is preferable that former residents make an appointment at one of the mass vaccination sites, retail pharmacy locations or regional vaccination sites. There are more than 170 community vaccination locations. You can schedule an appointment at a site near you at mass.gov/COVIDVaccine or call 2-1-1 if you are unable to use the internet to schedule an appointment.

Are hospitals responsible for vaccinating individuals prior to discharge to a long-term care facility?

While encouraged to vaccinate residents upon discharge, hospitals are not required to do so. If an unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individual is admitted to a long-term care facility, the facility should contact their long-term care pharmacy partner to get the vaccine dose(s) needed.

If a resident received their first dose at a location other than the long-term care facility prior to admission, will the facility provide the second dose?

Yes, the facility should reach out to the long-term care pharmacy partner to obtain a second dose for the resident. The resident does not need to return to the location where they received their first dose.

Are residents required to provide information on whether they have been vaccinated upon admission to the facility?

No, residents are not required to provide vaccination information upon admission; however, if vaccinated, it may prove to be beneficial to the resident as it allows for expanded visitation and group activities.

Residents in need of a second dose should provide documentation of a first dose if they have it available. This will enable long-term care facility staff who are providing direct care to ensure the resident receives the correct type of second dose. T

Can residents and staff choose which vaccine they receive?

No. Residents and staff will receive the vaccine offered to them when they attend a vaccination clinic or receive a dose from their facility's long-term care pharmacy partner. All the vaccines are highly effective and safe. The best vaccine is the one that is available to you. People are urged to take whatever shot they can as soon as it's available.