

Catholic Health hits 10,000 mark in first doses of COVID-19 vaccine

A little over a month into its COVID-19 vaccination program, Catholic Health has delivered first doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to more than 10,000 individuals, including nearly 7,000 of its associates and medical providers and more than 3,000 community providers. In addition, as part of the federal Pharmacy Partnership for Long-term Care (LTC) Program, Walgreens pharmacists have vaccinated more than 300 residents and staff on site at four Catholic Health nursing homes.

"This is the first of what we hope will be many milestones for our system and community," said Heather Loomis, director of acute care operations for Catholic Health. "The team worked incredibly hard to develop and staff our vaccine PODS (points of dispensing), which will provide us with a framework as we look to expand vaccinations to our patients and other members of our community."

Catholic Health has also administered second doses of the vaccine to more than 3,000 associates, relying heavily on its new



Left: Pictured receiving a vaccination is Thomas A. Cumbo, M.D., vice president of medical affairs at Mount St. Mary's Hospital in Lewiston. • Right: Jacqueline Pawlak, RN, nursing unit coordinator, ICU, received the first vaccination at MSM.

Epic Electronic Health Record (EHR) and MyChart patient portal to record vaccinations, schedule appointments, and send reminders for second doses.

"MyChart has been an invaluable tool to help us manage the vaccination process from start to finish," Loomis added. "It's also a great tool for patients, putting

their medical records and health information at their fingertips."

Catholic Health currently has nine vaccination PODS in Erie and Niagara Counties: five at its hospital locations for associate and providers on its medical staff, and four at its primary care centers for local EMS workers and other community medi-

cal providers. The four primary care center PODS are preparing to expand to other priority community groups in the coming days.

"We understand how eager members of our community are to receive the vaccine and we ask them to be patient as we continue to build the infrastructure and processes to vaccinate everyone in the most efficient and equitable way possible," Loomis said. "We thank all our caregivers who have been working tirelessly throughout this pandemic to serve our community. We feel honored, blessed and hopeful to be part of the solution that will bring brighter days ahead."

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Memorial to hold free COVID-19 testing event

Niagara Falls Memorial Center will conduct free community testing for COVID-19 from 1-4 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 28, at the Niagara Falls Public Library's Earl W. Brydges Building, 1425 Main St. The testing will be funded by the CARES Act grant provided to Memorial by the City of Niagara Falls.

Nose swab PCR testing for COVID-19 will be provided at this session. Preregistration is not required, and walk-ins are welcome.

Open enrollment now through March 31

As part of New York's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Thursday an-

nounced the open enrollment period for uninsured New Yorkers will be extended through March 31. New Yorkers can apply for coverage through NY State of Health, New York's Official Health Plan Marketplace, or directly through insurers.

Extending the open enrollment period helps to align New York with the federal Public Health Emergency, which was recently extended to April 20. This extension allows individuals eligible for Qualified Health Plan insurance additional time to enroll for coverage in 2021 and means enrollment remains open for all NY State of Health programs.

Coverage start dates will vary:
√ Enroll by Feb. 15: Coverage starts March 1
√ Enroll March 15: Coverage starts April 1
√ Enroll by March 31: Coverage starts May 1

Individuals who are eligible for other NY State of Health programs – Medicaid, Essential Plan and Child Health Plus – can enroll year-round.



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