



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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MIKIE SHERRILL
Governor

www.nj.gov/health

DR. RAYNARD E. WASHINGTON
Commissioner

EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE No. 26-002

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 26:4-1 to -26, the New Jersey Department of Health is statutorily charged with preventing and controlling the spread of communicable diseases in the State; and

WHEREAS, to discharge these duties and responsibilities, the Department of Health's Vaccine Preventable Disease Program works to reduce and eliminate vaccine-preventable diseases affecting children, adolescents, and older adults by raising the immunization coverage rates of New Jerseyans; and

WHEREAS, the prevention of individual cases and outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases require high immunization levels, which, in turn, help individuals and communities avoid the physical sequelae, morbidities, and mortalities that these diseases can cause, and curtail the associated high social costs that otherwise would burden children, families, older adults, and the community at large; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a contagious, and at times fatal, respiratory disease; and

WHEREAS, preventing the spread of COVID-19 not only helps protect the public health, but also eases the strain that health care systems can experience with increased COVID-19 activity; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 vaccines are safe and one of the most effective defenses against severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the recommendations by numerous medical experts and professional organizations remain unwavering in their recommendations for the continuation of routine COVID-19 vaccinations; and

WHEREAS, in 2026, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) published a schedule continuing to recommend COVID-19 vaccination for children between the ages of six months through 23 months and recommends a risk-based approach for vaccinating children against COVID-19 who are ages two years through 18 years of age;¹ and

WHEREAS, in 2026, the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) published a

¹ <https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/AAP-Immunization-Schedule.pdf>

schedule, which recommends that all children ages 6 through 23 months be vaccinated against COVID-19, recommends a risk-based single dose approach for children and teens two years through 18 years of age, recommends all adults 19 years and older receive a COVID-19 vaccine, and recommends COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy in any trimester, and during lactation;² and

WHEREAS, on September 2, 2026, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) issued an updated schedule continuing to recommend that all pregnant and lactating individuals receive a COVID-19 vaccination and emphasized that vaccination should occur at the earliest opportunity to bolster maternal and fetal health;³ and

WHEREAS, in September 2026, the Vaccine Integrity Project of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota released data from its comprehensive evidence review on the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines, among other vaccines. The data showed that the updated COVID-19 vaccines continue to provide meaningful protection against hospitalization, intensive care admission, and death, particularly among older adults and other high-risk populations. The review identified no new safety concerns in comparative studies;⁴ and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 continues to circulate throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, to keep the spread of COVID-19 at bay and prevent a widespread resurgence of the disease in the State, it is essential that all individuals in New Jersey continue to have access to COVID-19 vaccinations; and

WHEREAS, in August 2026, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved updated COVID-19 vaccine formulations including:

- Pfizer's COMIRNATY for adults 65 years of age and older, as well as individuals five years of age through 64 years of age who have at least one underlying condition that puts them at high risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19; and
- Moderna's SPIKEVAX for individuals 65 years of age and older, as well as individuals six months through 64 years of age with at least one underlying condition that puts them at high risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19; and

² <https://www.aafp.org/clinical-insights/immunizations-and-vaccines/immunizations-schedules-resources>

³ <https://www.acog.org/-/media/project/acog/acogorg/files/pdfs/programs/immunization/maternal-immunization-schedule.pdf?rev=69fa35f9cf3d4080b3ec8a6210031b2e&hash=716663FDEE4675D6A88003173C725B09>

⁴ <https://vaxintegrity.cidrap.umn.edu/2026-27-respiratory-season-evidence-review>

- Moderna's MNEXSPIKE for individuals 65 years of age and older and individuals 12 years of age through 64 years of age who have at least one underlying condition that puts them at high risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19; and
- Novavax's NUVOXAVID, for individuals aged 65 and older and individuals 12 years of age through 64 years of age who have at least one underlying condition that puts them at high risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the FDA's recent approvals create unfounded and unsupported barriers to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine for all individuals who do not fall into one of the above categories, but who would benefit from COVID-19 vaccination; and

WHEREAS, the FDA's approvals continue to conflict with recommendations previously issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the guidance issued by the professional organizations described above, creating fear, uncertainty, and confusion in New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, restricted access to the updated COVID-19 vaccine significantly impacts the State's ability to support public health and safety through prevention; and

WHEREAS, to ensure all individuals in New Jersey who wish to receive a COVID-19 vaccination are able to obtain such vaccination, additional guidance and information is needed regarding COVID-19 vaccinations; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. testified before the U.S. Senate Finance Committee on September 4, 2025; and

WHEREAS, during the Senate Finance Committee hearing, Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. specifically testified that "Everybody can get [the COVID-19 vaccine];"⁵ and

WHEREAS, based upon the clear, scientific, and evidence-based recommendations from medical professionals and organizations regarding the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines and to ensure all individuals in New Jersey who wish for themselves, or their children ages three years and older, to receive a COVID-19 vaccination to maintain their health and well-being are able to obtain such vaccinations, a State issued Standing Order allowing individuals to receive COVID-19 vaccination from a pharmacy without a prescription is necessary and appropriate.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Dr. Raynard E. Washington, Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health, hereby ORDER and DIRECT the following:

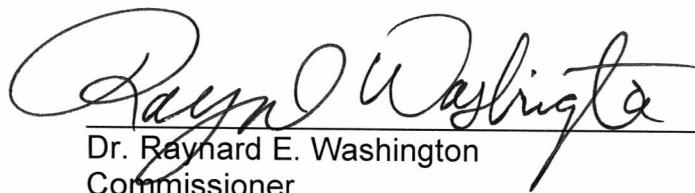
1. Based upon clear, scientific, and evidence-based recommendations from trusted medical professionals and organizations, including the AAP, ACOG, AAFP, and the Vaccine Integrity Project, the Department of Health continues to ensure and

⁵ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/fact-checking-rfk-jr-s-claim-that-everybody-can-get-the-covid-19-vaccine>

recommend that individuals 6 months of age and older have access to a COVID-19 vaccine for the 2026–2027 respiratory illness season.

- a. It is recommended that individuals discuss their risk factors for COVID-19 complications and the benefits of receiving the COVID-19 immunization with their health care provider to determine the best course for vaccination.
2. The Department of Health may collaborate with appropriate State agencies, boards, and offices to develop and issue clinical guidance for the administration of COVID-19 immunizations to ensure all individuals recommended to receive a COVID-19 vaccine by the Department of Health are able to receive the immunization.
3. The Department of Health shall collaborate with appropriate State agencies, boards, and offices to identify and remove barriers to affordability and accessibility of COVID-19 vaccination.
4. The Deputy Commissioner for the Public Health Services Branch of the Department of Health, who is a licensed physician, shall issue a Standing Order, which will serve as a prescription for pharmacists, pharmacy interns, pharmacy externs, and pharmacy technicians, within their respective scopes of practice, to administer authorized COVID-19 vaccinations to individuals who are ages three years and older.

This Directive shall take effect immediately and replaces Executive Directive 25-004, which was issued on September 8, 2025. The provisions of this Directive shall remain in force and effect until modified, supplemented and/or rescinded.



Dr. Raynard E. Washington
Commissioner
Department of Health

September 28, 2026
Date