New Bedford residents encouraged to get COVID-19 vaccine ahead of Holiday season

“Free, walk-up COVID-19 clinics in New Bedford offer all CDC-approved vaccine doses and boosters, for adults and youth. Bringing your vaccination card when getting a booster shot is helpful, but not required.

Clinics provided by Seven Hills Behavioral Health, unless otherwise marked.

NOTE: The Seven Hills vaccine clinic at PAACA on Coggeshall Street and the former Fire Station 11 in the South End will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 24 and Saturday, Nov. 26 for the Thanksgiving holiday

Visit vaxnb.com for updated schedules of local COVID-19 vaccination and testing locations. Upcoming vaccine locations in New Bedford include:

• Thursday, Nov. 17:

PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for adults, and children 5 years and older

• Saturday, Nov. 19:

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for adults, and children 5 years and older

• Monday, Nov. 21:

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for adults, and children 5 years and older

• Monday, Nov. 28:

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for adults, and children 5 years and older

Reminder on the importance of vaccinations:

Getting vaccinated and boosted for COVID-19 is not only about protecting yourself – it's also about protecting your family, friends, and community. Vaccination and boosters are critically important to consider ahead of travel, holidays, and large gatherings, which can lead to super-spreader events, clusters, hospitalizations, and severe illness among people who are unvaccinated.

State Resources for Vaccine Records, Locations

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has free online services to find your personal vaccine records and local vaccination locations, including many pharmacies.

Access your vaccine records at https://myvaxrecords.mass.gov/, and find local listings at https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/." -City of New Bedford.

City of New Beford announces

3rd round of FREE at-home COVID test kit distribution

Free tests available at public libraries as new school year begins.

City health and emergency management officials are coordinating with the city's public libraries to distribute free, at-home COVID-19 test kits, available until supplies last.

The free distribution coincides with the start of the school year and the approach of potential increases in COVID-19 cases in the fall. Test kits are available at New Bedford public libraries, in the City's third round of free test distribution over the past year.

In December 2021, the City distributed nearly 38,000 kits (each containing two tests) through community partners. The City distributed thousands more tests in April 2022.

Parents with vulnerable children are encouraged to obtain kits even if there is no immediate exposure risk or active case in their household. Likewise, even as overall COVID-19 transmission levels remain modest, small business owners (provided they are residents) may wish to consider obtaining kits to help protect vulnerable employees in the event of a future workplace exposure.

LIBRARY HOURS

Free COVID-19 at-home test kits are available at all public library branches. Locations and hours are as follows:

- **Main Library**
613 Pleasant St.
(508) 991-6275

Monday – Thursday: 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.
Friday & Saturday: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

• **Casa Da Saudade Branch**
58 Crapo St.
(508) 991-6218

Tuesday – Thursday: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

• **Wilks Branch**
1911 Acushnet Ave.
(508) 991-6214

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, & Saturday: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Tuesday & Thursday: 12 p.m. – 8 p.m.

• **Lawler Branch**
745 Rockdale Ave.
(508) 991-6216

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, & Saturday: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Tuesday & Thursday: 12 p.m. – 8 p.m.

• **Howland-Green Branch**
3 Rodney French Blvd.
(508) 991-6212

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, & Saturday: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Tuesday & Thursday: 12 p.m. – 8 p.m.

BACKGROUND ON TEST KITS

Residents use the tests at home. Test results are available in minutes and samples do not need to go to a laboratory. People do not need a cell phone or computer for any part of the test. The tests are effective for all individuals 2 years of age and up, regardless of vaccination status or whether they have symptoms.

Residents are advised to take note of expiration date

information on test kit boxes. Each test kit box has a sticker on the front with a Quick Response (QR) Code that can be scanned to view the tests' expiration date online. Earlier this summer, the FDA extended the shelf life of all iHealth tests by 3 months. Learn more: https://ihealthlabs.com/pages/news

If you test negative, continue to monitor yourself for indications of infection. If you develop symptoms or existing symptoms worsen, take another home test or seek a PCR test at a testing location: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test

If you test positive, consider confirming your result with a PCR test at a testing location (see link above), isolate consistent with CDC guidelines, and notify any close contacts who may have been exposed to COVID-19. Learn more: mass.gov/COVIDtreatment

For more information on at-home tests, visit: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/self-testing.html/

View COVID-19 information and indicators on the City's website:

www.newbedford-ma.gov/health-department/coronavirus/

FDA Authorizes Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19

Vaccines for Children Down to 6 Months of Age

Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized emergency use of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine and the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19 to include use in children down to 6 months of age.

– For the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine, the FDA amended the emergency use authorization (EUA) to include use of the vaccine in individuals 6 months through 17 years of age. The vaccine had been authorized for use in adults 18 years of age and older.
– For the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, the FDA amended the EUA to include use of the vaccine in individuals 6 months through 4 years of age. The vaccine had been authorized for use in individuals 5 years of age and older.

Key points:

– The FDA's evaluation and analysis of the safety, effectiveness and manufacturing data of these vaccines was rigorous and comprehensive, supporting the EUAs.
– The agency determined that the known and potential benefits of the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines outweigh the known and potential risks in the pediatric populations authorized for use for each vaccine.
– Prior to making the decision to authorize these vaccines for the respective pediatric populations, the FDA's independent Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee was consulted and voted in support of the authorizations.

"Many parents, caregivers and clinicians have been waiting for a vaccine for younger children and this action will help protect those down to 6 months of age. As we have seen with older age groups, we expect that the vaccines for younger

children will provide protection from the most severe outcomes of COVID-19, such as hospitalization and death," said FDA Commissioner Robert M. Califf, M.D. "Those trusted with the care of children can have confidence in the safety and effectiveness of these COVID-19 vaccines and can be assured that the agency was thorough in its evaluation of the data."

The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine is administered as a primary series of two doses, one month apart, to individuals 6 months through 17 years of age. The vaccine is also authorized to provide a third primary series dose at least one month following the second dose for individuals in this age group who have been determined to have certain kinds of immunocompromise.

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine is administered as a primary series of three doses in which the initial two doses are administered three weeks apart followed by a third dose administered at least eight weeks after the second dose in individuals 6 months through 4 years of age.

Information about each vaccine is available in the fact sheets for healthcare providers administering vaccine and the fact sheets for recipients and caregivers.

"As with all vaccines for any population, when authorizing COVID-19 vaccines intended for pediatric age groups, the FDA ensures that our evaluation and analysis of the data is rigorous and thorough," said Peter Marks, M.D., Ph.D., director of the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research. "In addition to making certain the data for these vaccines met FDA's rigorous standards, the agency's convening of an advisory committee was part of a transparent process to help the public have a clear understanding of the safety and effectiveness data supporting the authorization of these two vaccines for pediatric populations."

Evaluation of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine for Individuals 6

Months through 17 Years of Age

Effectiveness

The effectiveness and safety data evaluated and analyzed by the FDA for the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine to support the EUA for these pediatric populations were generated in two ongoing, randomized, blinded, placebo-controlled clinical trials in the United States and Canada which enrolled infants, children and adolescents.

– Children 6 months through 5 years of age: Immune responses of a subset of 230 children 6 through 23 months and a subset of 260 children 2 through 5 years of age who received a two-dose primary series of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine at 25 micrograms (mcg) of messenger RNA (mRNA) per dose were compared to immune responses among 290 adults 18 through 25 years who received two higher doses of the vaccine in a previous study which determined the vaccine to be effective in preventing COVID-19. In these FDA analyses, the immune response to the vaccine, of both age groups of children, was comparable to the immune response of the adults.

An analysis of cases of COVID-19 occurring at least 14 days after the second dose among approximately 5,400 children in this age group without evidence of prior infection with SARS-CoV-2 was conducted during the time period in which the omicron variant was the predominant circulating strain. In this analysis, among participants 6 through 23 months of age, 64% of whom had blinded follow-up for more than two months after the second dose, the vaccine was 50.6% effective in preventing COVID-19. Among participants 2 through 5 years of age, 72% of whom had blinded follow-up for more than two months after the second dose, the vaccine was 36.8% effective in preventing COVID-19.

– Children 6 years through 11 years of age: Immune responses of a subset of 320 children in this age group who received a

two-dose primary series of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine at 50 mcg of mRNA per dose were compared to immune responses among 295 adults 18 through 25 years who received two higher doses of the vaccine in a previous study which determined the vaccine to be effective in preventing COVID-19. In the FDA analysis, the immune response of the children to the vaccine was comparable to the immune response of the adults. An additional analysis pertaining to the occurrence of COVID-19 cases was determined not to be reliable due to the low number of COVID-19 cases that occurred in study participants.
Adolescents 12 through 17 years of age: Immune responses of a subset of 340 adolescents in this age group who received a two-dose primary series of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine at 100 mcg of mRNA per dose were compared to immune responses among 296 adults 18 through 25 years who received two equivalent doses of the vaccine in a previous study which determined the vaccine to be effective in preventing COVID-19. In this analysis, the immune response of adolescents was comparable to the immune response of the older participants.

An analysis was also conducted of cases of COVID-19 occurring at least 14 days after the second dose among approximately 3,000 adolescents in this age group without evidence of prior infection with SARS-CoV-2, in which approximately 42% of participants had two or more months of blinded follow-up after the second dose. In this analysis, among participants 12 through 17 years of age, the vaccine was 93.3% effective in preventing COVID-19. The data for this analysis were obtained before the omicron variant became the predominant circulating strain.

Safety

The safety data to support the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine EUA in individuals 6 months through 17 years of age are as follows:

– Children 6 months through 5 years of age: Safety was evaluated in approximately 1,700 children 6 through 23 months

of age who received the vaccine and 600 who received the placebo. Of these, approximately 1,100 vaccine recipients were followed for safety for at least two months following the second dose. For participants 2 through 5 years of age, approximately 3,000 received the vaccine and approximately 1,000 received a placebo; approximately 2,200 vaccine recipients were followed for safety for at least two months following the second dose. In clinical trial participants 6 months through 5 years of age, the most commonly reported side effects across all age subgroups included pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, fever and underarm (or groin) swelling/tenderness of lymph nodes in the same arm (or thigh) as the injection. In clinical trial participants 6 through 36 months of age, the most commonly reported side effects also included irritability/crying, sleepiness, and loss of appetite. In clinical trial participants 37 months through 5 years of age, the most commonly reported side effects also included fatigue, headache, muscle ache, chills, nausea/vomiting and joint stiffness.
Children 6 through 11 years of age: Safety was evaluated in approximately 3,000 children who received the vaccine and approximately 1,000 children who received placebo. The majority of vaccine recipients (98.7%) had at least two months of safety follow-up after their second dose.

– Adolescents 12 through 17 years of age: Safety was evaluated in approximately 2,500 participants who received the vaccine and 1,200 who received placebo. The majority of vaccine recipients (95.6%) had at least six months of follow-up after the second dose.

– The most commonly reported side effects in the clinical trial participants for both the 6 through 11 age group and the 12 through 17 age group who received the vaccine include, pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, underarm swollen lymph nodes in the same arm as the injection, nausea and

vomiting and fever.

Evaluation of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for Children 6 Months through 4 Years of Age

The effectiveness and safety data evaluated and analyzed by the FDA for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine were generated in an ongoing, randomized, blinded, placebo-controlled clinical trial in the United States and internationally, which enrolled infants and children.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness data to support the EUA in children 6 months through 4 years of age is based on a comparison of immune responses following three doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine in a subset of children in this age group to the immune responses among adults 16 through 25 years of age who received two higher doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine in a previous study which determined the vaccine to be effective in preventing COVID-19. The study was conducted in two age subgroups. The immune response to the vaccine of approximately 80 children, 6 through 23 months of age, and approximately 140 children, 2 through 4 years of age, were compared to the immune response of approximately 170 of the older participants. In these FDA analyses, the immune response to the vaccine for both age groups of children was comparable to the immune response of the older participants. An additional analysis pertaining to the occurrence of COVID-19 cases was determined not to be reliable due to the low number of COVID-19 cases that occurred in study participants.
Safety

The available safety data to support the EUA in children 6 through 23 months of age include approximately 1,170 who received the vaccine and approximately 600 who received placebo; approximately 400 vaccine recipients were followed for safety for at least two months following the third dose.

For the participants 2 through 4 years of age, approximately 1,800 received the vaccine and approximately 900 received placebo; approximately 600 vaccine recipients were followed for safety for at least two months following the third dose. The most commonly reported side effects in clinical trial participants 6 through 23 months of age who received the vaccine were irritability, decreased appetite, fever and pain, tenderness, redness and swelling at the injection site. These side effects were also reported for the vaccine recipients 2 through 4 years age, in addition to fever, headache, and chills.

Risks of Myocarditis and Pericarditis

The FDA and CDC safety surveillance systems have previously identified increased risks of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of tissue surrounding the heart) following vaccination with the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine and the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, particularly following the second dose. The observed risk is highest in males 18 through 24 years of age for the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine and in males 12 through 17 years of age for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

The FDA and the CDC analyses of available safety surveillance data from the U.S. and other countries on myocarditis outcomes continue to strengthen the evidence that most cases of myocarditis associated with the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines are characterized by rapid resolution of symptoms following conservative management, with no impact on quality of life reported by most patients who were contacted for follow-up at 90 days or more after reporting myocarditis. The risks of myocarditis and pericarditis are described in the fact sheets for each of these vaccines.

Ongoing Safety Monitoring

As part of their original EUA requests, both ModernaTX Inc.

and Pfizer Inc. submitted plans to continue to monitor the safety of the vaccines as they are used under EUA. These plans for monitoring the overall safety of the vaccines and ensuring that any safety concerns are identified and evaluated in a timely manner, and which include monitoring for myocarditis and pericarditis, have been updated to include the newly authorized populations. In addition, longer-term safety follow-up is ongoing for participants enrolled in the clinical trials for both vaccines. Furthermore, the FDA and the CDC have several systems in place to continually monitor COVID-19 vaccine safety and allow for the timely detection and investigation of potential safety concerns.

It is mandatory for both ModernaTX Inc. and Pfizer Inc., as well as vaccination providers, to report the following to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) for these two COVID-19 vaccines: serious adverse events, cases of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome and cases of COVID-19 that result in hospitalization or death. It is also mandatory for vaccination providers to report all vaccine administration errors to VAERS for which they become aware and for vaccine manufacturers to include a summary and analysis of all identified vaccine administration errors in monthly safety reports submitted to the FDA.

The EUA amendment for the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine was issued to ModernaTX Inc. and the EUA amendment for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine was issued to Pfizer Inc.

Massachusetts Department of

Public Health Releases Updated Mask Advisory

The Department of Public Health (DPH) released updated guidance regarding the use of masks and face coverings in the Commonwealth. Recognizing that Massachusetts is a national leader in vaccination rates with over 84 percent of eligible residents fully vaccinated and over half of adults boosted, and in light of recent improvements in COVID-19 indicators, effective July 1, 2022, the new guidance advises that masks indoors are optional for most individuals, regardless of vaccination status.

Massachusetts residents have ready access to vaccines, rapid tests, and therapeutics – all the resources needed to prevent severe illness and the Commonwealth's COVID data shows these tools work.

"To protect friends and family members, residents are reminded that getting a vaccine and booster remain the best way to protect against serious illness or hospitalization from COVID-19," said Public Health Commissioner Margret Cooke. "Based on our nation-leading vaccination efforts, DPH now recommends that Massachusetts residents have the option to make a personal choice about wearing a mask or face covering in indoor settings regardless of vaccination status."

All people in Massachusetts (regardless of vaccination status) are required to continue wearing masks or face coverings in certain settings, including in health care facilities. DPH continues to advise masks for individuals with a weakened immune system, those at increased risk for severe disease because of age or underlying conditions, or who have a household member with a weakened immune system and at increased risk.

Visit www.mass.gov/maskrules for a complete list of venues where face coverings remain required. Today, state requirements for face coverings in certain congregate care settings were also adjusted

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Upcoming COVID-19 vaccine clinics, CDC-approved vaccine doses and boosters

Free, walk-up COVID-19 clinics in New Bedford offer all CDC-approved vaccine doses and boosters, for adults and youth. Bringing your vaccination card when getting a booster shot is helpful, but not required.

Clinics provided by Seven Hills Behavioral Health, unless otherwise marked.

Visit vaxnb.com for updated schedules of local COVID-19 vaccination and testing locations. Upcoming vaccine locations in New Bedford include:

Saturday, June 11:

• Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults
• Junta Mon Music Festival at the Cape Verdean Cultural Center / Island Park (1157 Acushnet Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J & J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Monday, June 13:

• Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.,

Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Wednesday, June 15:

• Community Economic Development Center (1501 Acushnet Ave.) – 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Friday, June 17:

• PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Saturday, June 18:

• Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Monday, June 20:

• Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Wednesday, June 22:

• Community Economic Development Center (1501 Acushnet Ave.) – 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Friday, June 24:

• Brooklawn Park (1997 Acushnet Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults
• PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Reminder on the importance of vaccinations:

Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 is not only about protecting yourself – it's also about protecting your family, friends, and community. Vaccination is critically important to consider ahead of large gatherings, which can lead to super-spreader events, clusters, hospitalizations, and severe illness among people who are unvaccinated.

State Resources for Vaccine Records, Locations

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has free online services to find your personal vaccine records and local vaccination locations, including many pharmacies.

Access your vaccine records at https://myvaxrecords.mass.gov/, and find local listings at https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/.

Upcoming COVID-19 testing sites for City of New Bedford; how to get FREE at-home tests

Project Beacon's appointment-based COVID-19 testing at New Bedford Regional Airport—part of the state's Stop the Spread program—is offering testing on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

Appointments for free COVID-19 tests can be made at beacontesting.com. Airport officials ask that people reach the site via the airport's side entrance on Downey Street.

Contact Project Beacon by email at help@beacontesting.com; or by calling 617-741-7310.

The federal government is offering free at-home rapid COVID-19 test kits online, at COVIDtests.gov. Every home in the U.S. is now eligible to order a third round of free at-home tests. Each order includes eight rapid antigen COVID-19 tests.

If you test positive with a rapid test, isolate for at least five days and notify close contacts. State guidance on isolation and quarantining can be found here.

If you test negative, re-testing a day or more later is advised, particularly if you have symptoms or a known exposure to the virus.

Testing sites in New Bedford and surrounding towns can be found on the state's Stop the Spread website, www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test.

Upcoming testing locations in New Bedford include:

Tuesday, June 14:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Thursday, June 16:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 12 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Sunday, June 19:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tuesday, June 21:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Thursday, June 23:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 12 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Sunday, June 26:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Southcoast Health Transitions COVID-19 Testing Locations

On Saturday, May 28, 2022, the COVID-19 test collection trailers at all three Southcoast hospital sites will close, officials announced.

Testing will transition to alternate collection locations within established patient care centers for asymptomatic patients, with limited appointment availability for symptomatic patients, who are encouraged to use at-home antigen tests when able, officials said.

Southcoast Health asks patients to please use **MyChart** or contact the COVID-19 Hotline (508-973-1919) to make an appointment for PCR testing. Hours and availability at each site will vary.

PCR tests are often used by patients needing results for travel, return to work or school, and/or surgeries requiring admission.

New COVID-19 Test Collection Locations (APPOINTMENTS REQUIRED THROUGH MYCHART OR BY CALLING 508-973-1919)

Fairhaven: Southcoast Lab Patient Service Center, 208 Mill

Road

Fall River: Southcoast Lab Patient Service Center, 373 New Boston Rd.

Fall River: Southcoast Patient Service Center, Truesdale Health, 1030 President’s Ave.

Fall River: Charlton Memorial Hospital Outpatient Lab Collection

New Bedford: St. Luke’s Hospital Outpatient Lab Collection Alcove

Wareham: Tobey Hospital Outpatient Lab Collection

To schedule, log in to MyChart – once you are logged in, scroll down to the COVID-19 Testing button to book an appointment.

To sign-up for MyChart, follow this link for activation of your account, mychart.southcoast.org/mychart/signup.

COVID-19 testing appointments will be available at the locations above beginning Tuesday May 31, 2022.

The transition comes as community demand for laboratory run COVID Testing has diminished significantly due to a decrease in cases and access to at-home testing.

As a reminder, Southcoast pre-surgical patients that are not being admitted post-surgery DO NOT require PCR testing, and should perform a home test as directed by the providers’ office.

Pre-surgical patients that will be admitted to the hospital post-surgery should be scheduled for PCR testing 48-72 hours prior to the surgery.

For all information about COVID-19 testing and vaccination, please visit COVID-19 Vaccination Information | Southcoast

Health.

For information on obtaining at-home tests, please visit COVID.gov/tests – Free at-home COVID-19 tests.

Upcoming City of New Bedford COVID-19 testing sites, free at-home kits available

Project Beacon's appointment-based COVID-19 testing at New Bedford Regional Airport—part of the state's Stop the Spread program—is offering testing on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

Appointments for free COVID-19 tests can be made at beacontesting.com. Airport officials ask that people reach the site via the airport's side entrance on Downey Street.

Contact Project Beacon by email at help@beacontesting.com; or by calling 617-741-7310.

NOTE: Project Beacon will not be offering testing on Sunday, May 29, due to the Memorial Day holiday.

The federal government is offering free at-home rapid COVID-19 test kits online, at COVIDtests.gov. Every home in the U.S. is now eligible to order a third round of free at-home tests. Each order includes eight rapid antigen COVID-19 tests.

If you test positive with a rapid test, isolate for at least five days and notify close contacts. State guidance on isolation and quarantining can be found here.

If you test negative, re-testing a day or more later is advised, particularly if you have symptoms or a known exposure to the virus.

Testing sites in New Bedford and surrounding towns can be found on the state's Stop the Spread website, www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test.

Upcoming testing locations in New Bedford include:

Tuesday, May 31:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Thursday, June 2:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 12 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Sunday, June 5:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tuesday, June 7:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Thursday, June 9:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 12 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Sunday, June 12:

• Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

City of New Bedford upcoming free COVID-19 vaccine clinics

Free, walk-up COVID-19 clinics in New Bedford offer all CDC-approved vaccine doses and boosters, for adults and youth.

Bringing your vaccination card when getting your booster shot is helpful, but not required. Clinics provided by Seven Hills Behavioral Health, unless otherwise marked.

NOTE: No clinic will be held at the Andrea McCoy Recreation Center on Saturday, May 28, or at the former Fire Station 11 on Monday, May 30, due to the Memorial Day holiday.

Visit vaxnb.com for updated schedules of local COVID-19 vaccination and testing locations. Upcoming vaccine locations in New Bedford include:

Wednesday, June 1:

• Community Economic Development Center (1501 Acushnet Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Friday, June 3:

• PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Saturday, June 4:

• Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Monday, June 6:

• Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Wednesday, June 8:

• Community Economic Development Center (1501 Acushnet Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Friday, June 10:

• PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults
• Guatemala Festival (Phillips Avenue Pocket Park) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Saturday, June 11:

• Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, vaccines and boosters for children and adults

Reminder on the importance of vaccinations:

Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 is not only about protecting yourself – it’s also about protecting your family, friends, and community. Vaccination is critically important to consider ahead of large gatherings, which can lead to super-spreader events, clusters, hospitalizations, and severe illness among people who are unvaccinated.

State Resources for Vaccine Records, Locations

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has free online services to find your personal vaccine records and local vaccination locations, including many pharmacies.

Access your vaccine records at https://myvaxrecords.mass.gov/,

and find local listings at https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/.

FDA expands eligibility for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine booster to children 5-11-years old

Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration amended the emergency use authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, authorizing the use of a single booster dose for administration to individuals 5 through 11 years of age at least five months after completion of a primary series with the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

“While it has largely been the case that COVID-19 tends to be less severe in children than adults, the omicron wave has seen more kids getting sick with the disease and being hospitalized, and children may also experience longer term effects, even following initially mild disease,” said FDA Commissioner Robert M. Califf, M.D. “The FDA is authorizing the use of a single booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for children 5 through 11 years of age to provide continued protection against COVID-19. Vaccination continues to be the most effective way to prevent COVID-19 and its severe consequences, and it is safe. If your child is eligible for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine and has not yet received their primary series, getting them vaccinated can help protect them from the potentially severe consequences that can occur, such as hospitalization and death.”

On Jan. 3, the FDA authorized the use of a single booster dose

of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for administration to individuals 12 through 15 years of age after completion of primary vaccination with the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. Today's action expands the use of a single booster dose of the vaccine for administration to individuals 5 through 11 years age at least five months after completion of a primary series of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. The FDA has authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for use in individuals 5 years of age and older and has approved Comirnaty (COVID-19 Vaccine, mRNA) for use in individuals 16 years of age and older.

"The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine is effective in helping to prevent the most severe consequences of COVID-19 in individuals 5 years of age and older," said Peter Marks, M.D., Ph.D., director of the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research. "Since authorizing the vaccine for children down to 5 years of age in October 2021, emerging data suggest that vaccine effectiveness against COVID-19 wanes after the second dose of the vaccine in all authorized populations. The FDA has determined that the known and potential benefits of a single booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for children 5 through 11 years of age at least five months after completing a primary series outweigh its known and potential risks and that a booster dose can help provide continued protection against COVID-19 in this and older age groups."

Data Supporting Effectiveness

The EUA for a single booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for children 5 through 11 years of age is based on FDA's analysis of immune response data in a subset of children from the ongoing randomized placebo-controlled trial that supported the October 2021 authorization of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine primary series in this age group. Antibody responses were evaluated in 67 study participants who received a booster dose 7 to 9 months after completing a two-dose primary series of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

The antibody level against the SARS-CoV-2 virus one month after the booster dose was increased compared to before the booster dose.

FDA Evaluation of Safety

The safety of a single booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine in this age group was assessed in approximately 400 children who received a booster dose at least five months (range 5 to 9 months) after completing a two-dose primary series. The most commonly reported side effects were pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, as well as fatigue, headache, muscle or joint pain and chills and fever.

The FDA did not hold a meeting of its Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee on today’s action, as the agency previously convened the committee for extensive discussions regarding the use of booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines and, after review of Pfizer’s EUA request, the FDA concluded that the request did not raise questions that would benefit from additional discussion by committee members. The FDA will make available on its website relevant documents regarding today’s authorization.

The amendment to the EUA was granted to Pfizer Inc.