

# I-VAC

## ILLINOIS VACCINATES AGAINST COVID-19

A project led by the Illinois Chapter  
of the American Academy of Pediatrics



# I-VAC NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2024

## COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATES CORNER:

1

### URGENT NEED TO INCREASE COVID-19, FLU, AND RSV IMMUNIZATIONS

The [CDC](#), as well as local health officials, have called for an increase in COVID-19, flu, and RSV immunization coverage as respiratory viruses continue to spread. Rising cases combined with low vaccination rates have led to increases in hospitalizations, more emergency department traffic, and a greater strain on healthcare systems in the US and in Illinois. As of 12/23/23, Illinois' [respiratory virus surveillance report](#) shows COVID-19 test positivity rates of 14.9%, with 5.1% of hospital admissions being attributed to COVID-19.

Patients can access COVID-19 vaccines through private insurance coverage, children who qualify can access free COVID-19 and flu vaccinations, as well as nirsevimab, through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, and adults who qualify can access free COVID-19 vaccine through the Bridge Access Program (BAP). The BAP allows uninsured and underinsured adults to get vaccinated at participating clinics, CVS, Walgreens, and eTrueNorth pharmacies. These locations can be found on [vaccines.gov](#).

Please continue to give strong vaccine recommendations, use motivational interviewing, and spend time counseling on the importance of these vaccines. Find additional information from health alerts recently released by both [IDPH](#) and [CDPH](#).

2

### UPDATES TO VACCINE ORDERING THROUGH VFC

IDPH sent out a SIREN on December 18, 2023 detailing the changes for how to order COVID-19 vaccines for VFC programs in I-CARE. With an increase in stock at distribution centers, providers can now order COVID-19 vaccines the same way as all other vaccines are ordered, rather than as a limited quantity order.

**Reminder: All VFC providers are required to stock and recommend COVID-19 vaccines.**

Order Intent:

☒ Pediatric/VFC ☐ Adult/317 ☐ Pediatric/VFC Limited Qty ☐ Adult/317 Limited Qty

Order Priority:

Order Summary:

Empty order

Add Vaccine:

All Vaccines ▾

Enter search for vaccine by group, brand name, manufacturer, or NDC. Or select from All Vaccines.

### 3 NEW COMIRNATY (PFIZER) REFRIGERATOR STABLE VACCINE

Current Pfizer 12y+ vaccine allocations are being replaced with Pfizer's new refrigerated 12y+ vaccine (NDC 00069-2377-10), a new presentation in a carton of 10 manufacturer-filled syringes (MFS).

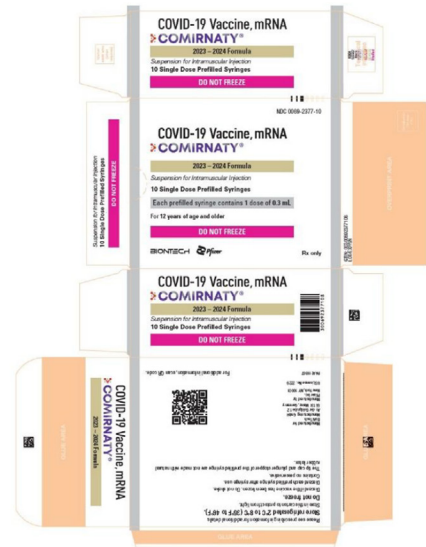
The new presentation of vaccines will come in a glass prefilled syringe and must be stored between 2°C and 8°C (36°F and 46°F). **Do NOT store at ultra-cold or standard freezer temperatures.**

Providers who have the original Pfizer 12y+ vaccine on hand can and should continue to use this product until it is consumed, expired, or has been stored at 2–8 °C for longer than the allowable 10 weeks.

The image shows a screenshot of the I-VAC website's vaccine table. The table is titled '2023-2024 COVID-19 VACCINE' and lists various COVID-19 vaccines, their manufacturers, and their status. The table is organized into columns for vaccine name, manufacturer, and other details. The I-VAC logo is visible in the top right corner of the screenshot.

You can review all [storage and handling requirements](#) on the I-VAC website.

Comirnaty 12y+ Refrigerated Vaccine Carton (pink bar indicating “Do Not Freeze”)



## FEDERAL PROGRAM OFFERING FREE COVID-19 TEST AND TREATMENTS

The [Home Test to Treat](#) program, which offers free COVID-19 and flu telehealth appointments, tests, and treatment, has expanded. Anyone over the age of 18 with a positive COVID-19 or flu test is eligible for free telehealth care and treatment medication delivered to the home if prescribed. Adults who have not tested positive can get free tests if they are enrolled in Medicare, Medicaid, the Veterans Affairs health system, or Indian Health Services. Those who test positive later are still eligible for the benefits of the program.

Free home-test reminder: Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order 4 free at-home tests beginning November 20, 2023. If you did not order 4 tests earlier in the fall, you can place two orders for a total of 8 tests. Urge patients to visit [COVID.gov](#) to order 4 additional free FDA-authorized COVID-19 tests.



# MEET OUR REGIONAL ADVISORS!

Meet Felicia Scott-Wellington, MD, who is located in Chicago, IL.

## **Q: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?**

**A:** My name is Felicia Scott-Wellington and I am an adolescent health physician. I provide health care to individuals ages 12-25 at the University of Illinois.

## **Q: How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted vaccination in your practice?**

**A:** There are layers of influence. My practice has patients that come with siblings who are younger and older. When the conversations about vaccines happen then everyone in the family can be a part of the conversation. As children get older, their views on vaccines can differ from the parents. I can encourage vaccination to both patient and parents depending on their views.

## **Q: Have you run into barriers when you try to vaccinate siblings or parents and not just your direct patient?**

**A:** I take the approach of learning from my patients. Barriers include generational beliefs and deeply rooted vaccine views. I have had to change my approach to vaccine conversations. I always explain to patients that vaccines provide protection. I tell my patients the COVID-19 vaccines are very important especially during the middle of the pandemic. There were many who changed their thought process during the pandemic. I also like to share the importance of vaccinating the WHOLE family.

## **Q: What ways, as a provider, do you stay up to date on vaccine recommendations?**

**A:** There are a couple of sources I follow. I reference the Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (ICAAP) for resources on all vaccines. I also sign up for CDPH and IDPH updates and websites. All care team members who are part of the VFC program receive warnings and notifications in our electronic health records system (EHR). A patient may hear stories on social media and come directly to me and that prompts me to make sure to I provide the most up to date information.



## **Q: How do you ensure all staff in your practice are aware of the same recommendations as clinical providers?**

**A:** There are a couple of ways. The VFC program integrates I-CARE notifications and notifications are received directly into our health records system. There are also physician team huddles that allow all staff to be updated on recommendation changes (COVID-19 vaccine rollout, age eligibility). There are many staff types that are included: nursing, front desk, medical assistants, and physician representatives. The updates are all reviewed together. This allows all staff to communicate the latest updates like vaccine shortages.

## **Q: How do you address hesitant patients and/or their parents? Is there a topline message that you share with patients who are hesitant?**

**A:** I like to start with specific concerns and make space during their visit. Many patients have talked about their hesitancy and how healthcare professionals may only provide generalized topline messages instead of addressing specific concerns. Patients want to be heard with their specific concerns. They want to feel confident in the decision they are making. Most who are hesitant have very specific reasons for not getting vaccinated. Those conversations happen in multiple visits. I let my patients know that I will continue to keep asking about vaccinations if they refuse the first time around. That way they are prepared to come to the clinic visit with their concerns. Some individuals may just need more time.

## **Q: How do you navigate under vaccinated or unvaccinated patients' accessibility barriers?**

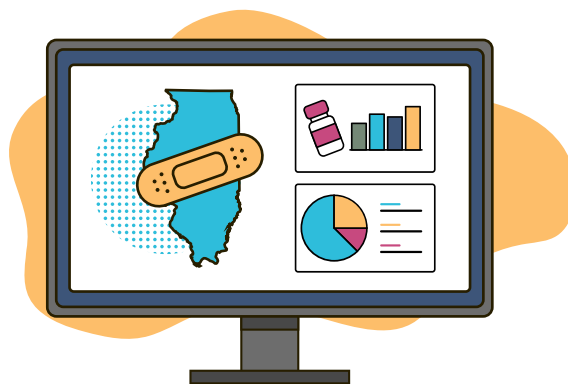
**A:** When you ask patients, there are many reasons as to why they have not received their vaccine. More recently, people have concerns about missing school or work. They may not have transportation to their visit, or they are concerned with an upfront cost. It can help to offer a doctor's note to get off work or school. Patients want to be vaccinated when it is convenient for them. There was a 19-year-old who did not want it in the clinic, but they got vaccinated at church due to more convenient scheduling. There have been others with similar concerns who want community-based vaccination. We also try to offer nurse-only visits at satellite locations with weekend hours. *Continued on page 4.*



Continued from page 3.

**Q: What tips do you have for fellow providers in the midst of respiratory virus season?**

**A:** Some patients think that if it's not publicized in the news then it's not happening. I try to tie my recommendation with timing like "its respiratory virus season." There are many people coming in with colds, influenza, and COVID. It can be helpful to provide trend updates to patients. Many do not realize when others are getting sick and I like to remind them how vaccinations allow us to live our lives, especially spending time with friends and family during the holiday season.



## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### I-VAC Bootcamp

Join us for an I-VAC bootcamp on Friday, February 9, 2024 and stay tuned for more on additional bootcamps, learning collaboratives, special sessions, AND a quality improvement project.

### NEW IN 2024: Adolescent Health Webinar Series!

ICAAP is excited to announce three live webinars in 2024! We hope you can join us for insights into this unique patient population! Please see below for the full webinar series topics and dates:

- **Mental Health in Adolescence** – January 18 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Managing Obesity in Adolescent Patients** – February 22 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity** – March 21 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Register for these webinars at [illinoisaaap.org/events](https://illinoisaaap.org/events)

## COVID-19 ORAL ANTIVIRAL COMMERCIALIZATION AND ACCESS

Lagevrio and Paxlovid have been transitioned to commercial distribution but there are still ways for some patients to access the medication at low or no cost. For Lagevrio, the [Merck Patient Assistance Program](#) will provide the medication at no cost for a full year to eligible patients including those who have Medicare or Medicaid and uninsured or underinsured patients. For Paxlovid, the [Paxcess Program](#) will provide the medication for free to those with Medicaid, Medicare, or who are uninsured through a voucher system the patient can sign up for. Those with commercial insurance can receive a \$1,500 co-pay assistance card by self-attesting to not having full coverage. There are no limits to how many times a patient can get a full course except for within 90 days of a previous course due to the low risk of reinfection within 90 days. An Illinois COVID-19 treatment locator website is also being developed and will be available [here](#).