



# News Release

**For immediate release**  
December 30, 2020

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## **Unified Health Command Announces COVID-19 Vaccination Availability for Healthcare Personnel**

**Billings, MT** – Since the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine, thousands of healthcare workers and first responders have been vaccinated in Yellowstone County. As medical professionals, we believe these vaccines are very safe and effective, especially when we consider the serious risks, long-term health implications and deadliness of the COVID-19 infection. We are excited about the prospects this vaccine holds for our community and, as the vaccine becomes more available, we are recommending as many people as possible get vaccinated so we can end this pandemic.

Currently, the vaccine is not yet available to the general public. We are administering the vaccine in priority order, as directed by state and federal authorities. In mid-December, frontline hospital workers and first responders were the first to be vaccinated in our community and across the nation.

Moving forward, the Unified Health Command (UHC), made up of Billings Clinic, St. Vincent Healthcare, RiverStone Health and Yellowstone County Disaster and Emergency Services, is expanding vaccination opportunities to all employees working in healthcare settings throughout Yellowstone County, as well as continuing to make the vaccine available to first responders.

“While demand for COVID-19 vaccinations continues to exceed supply, we are very pleased that we have vaccine in the community to offer protection to healthcare personnel outside of UHC organizations,” said John Felton, Yellowstone County’s Health Officer and CEO of RiverStone Health.

Following guidance from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the UHC is encouraging patient-facing healthcare personnel such as dental staff, physical therapists, optometrists, social workers, pharmacists and others to be vaccinated for COVID-19.

Individuals included in the above groups, are invited to schedule an appointment for COVID-19 vaccinations through either St. Vincent Healthcare or Billings Clinic. No walk-in vaccinations will be given. Patient-facing healthcare personnel and first responders must show valid credentials (proof of healthcare entity employment, employee badge, etc.) at the time of vaccination.

Billings Clinic will hold a COVID-19 vaccination clinic tomorrow, Thursday, December 31, 2020 from 6 a.m. to noon, and again on Saturday, January 2, 2021 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Additional clinics will be available in the coming weeks as supply allows.

St. Vincent Healthcare is holding a COVID-19 vaccination clinic today, Wednesday, December 30, 2020 from 3-7 p.m. Clinics are also scheduled next week, Monday-Friday, January 4- 8, 2020. Clinic times: 7-11 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and 2-8 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday. Vaccine supply is very unpredictable at this time. As a result, additional clinics will be scheduled as shipments are received.

For more information on the registration process and expectations, contact St. Vincent Healthcare at 406.237.7050 and Billings Clinic at 406.435.5744.

“It is important to note that people should continue to practice public health measures like wearing masks, distancing and avoiding crowds, even though they may have been vaccinated,” said Felton. “While both vaccines are about 95% effective after two doses, at this point, not enough people have received the COVID-19 vaccine, so you could still become ill, or you may be infected and be shedding the virus.”

As COVID-19 vaccine supply becomes more available, the UHC will expand vaccination opportunities for additional community members in accordance with federal, state and local guidelines.

Both the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines have been granted Emergency Use Authorization (EAU) from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and are available through Billings Clinic and St. Vincent Healthcare. Both require two vaccine doses spaced 28 and 21 days apart, respectively. The vaccines are not interchangeable and recipients must be vaccinated with the same vaccine type as the first dose, from the same organization. For more information about the COVID-19 vaccines, logon to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

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