



# News Release

**For immediate release**

January 18, 2021

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## **Unified Health Command Announces COVID-19 Vaccination Availability for Yellowstone County**

**Billings, MT** – The Unified Health Command (Billings Clinic, St. Vincent Healthcare, RiverStone Health and Yellowstone County Disaster and Emergency Services) announces that COVID-19 vaccine is now available in Yellowstone County to additional groups under the State of Montana’s vaccine allocation plan beginning the week of January 18, 2021.

In addition to healthcare personnel, first responders and staff and residents at long-term care facilities, the following can now be vaccinated:

- Individuals age 70 and older
- Individuals age 16-69 with high-risk medical conditions.
  - Cancer
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
  - Down Syndrome
  - Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
  - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
  - Severe Obesity (BMI  $\geq$  40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>)
  - Sickle cell disease
  - Type 1&2 Diabetes mellitus
  - On a case by case basis, medical providers may include individuals with other conditions that place them at elevated risk for COVID-19 complications
- American Indians and other people of color at elevated risk for severe COVID-19 complications

The above list is commonly referred to as Phase 1B in Governor Greg Gianforte’s COVID-19 vaccine allocation plan. While Yellowstone County will begin vaccinating people in Phase 1B this week, Billings Clinic, St. Vincent Healthcare and RiverStone Health only received approximately 2,100 first doses of vaccine.

Demand for COVID-19 vaccination continues to outpace supply at this time. It is expected that vaccine supply will become more readily available in the following weeks and months and until then, the Unified Health Command (UHC) asks Yellowstone County residents for patience as it continues to quickly and safely administer the vaccines that will help bring the pandemic to an end.

Healthcare personnel, first responders and individuals in Phase 1B can now schedule COVID-19 vaccination appointments through St. Vincent Healthcare, Billings Clinic and RiverStone Health. No walk-in vaccinations

will be given and individuals should bring photo identification and insurance information to their appointment. While there is no charge for the vaccine, an administration fee will be billed to insurance.

To schedule an appointment for vaccination:

- St. Vincent Healthcare: 406.237.7050 or if a St. Vincent Healthcare patient, through MyChart at [MyChart.SCLHealth.org](https://MyChart.SCLHealth.org)
- Billings Clinic: 406.435.5744 or if a Billings Clinic patient, through PatientConnect at [www.billingsclinic.com/patientconnect](https://www.billingsclinic.com/patientconnect).
- RiverStone Health Public Health: 406-651-6596 or through link <https://forms.gle/mUA22aWCE5i7XiZu8> RiverStone Health is only able to schedule vaccinations for people 18 and older because it received the Moderna vaccine. Public Health is not charging an administration fee.

“The Unified Health Command continues to work closely with our state partners on vaccine allocation and is administering it as quickly as we are able,” said John Felton, Yellowstone County’s Health Officer and President and CEO of RiverStone Health. “We wish we could give more COVID-19 vaccinations, but because vaccine supply has not caught up with demand, I ask residents to be patient.”

Felton went on to say, “Many Yellowstone County residents have called UHC partner organizations asking to be put on a COVID-19 vaccination waiting list. Unfortunately, there is no such list. Once we know how many vaccines we will receive, we coordinate our vaccination plans and for now, that is on a week-to-week basis.”

More than 6,000 COVID-19 vaccinations have been administered to healthcare personnel, first responders and residents and staff of long-term care facilities in Yellowstone County since mid-December. Some of those individuals have already received their second dose of vaccine.

At 95% efficacy after the second dose, COVID-19 vaccines offer extraordinary protection against the virus. A safety board approved every vaccine study and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) carefully reviewed data from every phase of every vaccine trial.

Both the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines have been granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the FDA. 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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