

# COVID-19 Update



## November 20, 2020

We continue to actively monitor the situation regarding the most recent coronavirus, known as COVID-19. In an attempt to keep you informed about the latest developments, we are sending out regular communication such as this to provide updates and answers to frequently asked questions. **We encourage you to share these updates with all members of your team, especially those who may not have regular access to email.** The latest all-employee communications and updated responses to FAQs can be found at:

<https://www.kindredhealthcare.com/employees/covid-19-updates>.

## Dear Colleagues:

I hope today's update finds you safe and well. As we look forward to Thanksgiving next week, I urge everyone to make safe choices about how to celebrate. It is extremely important for all of us to take steps to ensure the safety of our patients and fellow teammates by adhering to appropriate safety precautions as we make our holiday plans.

As a reminder, the [CDC recently published recommendations](#) that outline activities and the risks involved, encouraging Americans to avoid attending large gatherings with people from outside your household, including dinners, parades, and busy shopping venues. They suggest lower-risk alternatives such as hosting a small dinner with only people who live in your household, having a virtual dinner with friends and family, and shopping online rather than in person.

You can click the image shown here to [download a flyer](#) from the CDC with recommendations for alternative Thanksgiving activities. Feel free to share it with your teammates or friends and family.

Please note the CDC issues these considerations to supplement – not replace—any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations, so be sure to check guidance for your respective community. For more information on how to safely celebrate this year, visit the CDC's page for full guidance related to [holiday celebrations](#). Thank you for doing your part to help minimize the spread of the virus and honor the trust our patients and their families put in us.



The flyer features two illustrations: one of a family at a dining table with a laptop, and another of a person in a red coat walking to a house. The text is organized into four sections with bullet points.

**Host a virtual Thanksgiving meal with friends and family who don't live with you**

- Schedule a time to share a meal together virtually.
- Have people share recipes and show their turkey, dressing, or other dishes they prepared.

**Watch television and play games with people in your household**

- Watch Thanksgiving Day parades, sports, and movies at home.
- Find a fun game to play.

**Shopping**

- Shop online sales the day after Thanksgiving and days leading up to the winter holidays.
- Use contactless services for purchased items, like curbside pick-up.
- Shop in open air markets staying 6 feet away from others.

**Other Activities**

- Safely prepare traditional dishes and deliver them to family and neighbors in a way that does not involve contact with others (for example, leave them on the porch).
- Participate in a gratitude activity, like writing down things you are grateful for and sharing with your friends and family.

 [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

## An Update on Potential Vaccines

Over the last few weeks, there has been a lot of news about the [development of a vaccine against SARS CoV2](#),

the virus that causes COVID-19. While the details around the development and approval of a vaccine are complicated, as healthcare professionals we should all take responsibility for being informed about the latest announcements. With input from Drs. Kim Perry, Sean Muldoon, and Sally Brooks, below is an overview that provides some key details about the current status of vaccine development, deployment, and effectiveness.

### **Development**

The COVID-19 vaccine got off to a fast start because much of the work was already underway with vaccine development for two similar coronaviruses, those causing SARS and MERS. Instead of growing a virus in an egg-based culture and then partially destroying it so it can't cause infections (the process commonly used for the influenza vaccine), the COVID vaccines tend to use two new technologies:

- Creating a vaccine containing the messenger RNA (mRNA) – which is similar to DNA – from the virus particle to produce an immune response (known as the mRNA method); or
- Inserting the mRNA into a more familiar virus (like the adenovirus that causes the common cold) and vaccinating individuals with the adenovirus acting as the agent that carries the modified genetic material (known as the vector method).

Although there are other ways to make a vaccine, in all likelihood, the first set of COVID vaccines will be either mRNA or vector based.

The requirement for the COVID virus to get an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be distributed is it must be at least 50% effective in reducing either the severity of symptoms OR the incidence of illness. The final step to receiving an EUA involves comparing a large group of people (approximately 30,000 to 45,000) where some receive the vaccine and some receive a placebo, and monitoring those individuals to determine how many in each group get COVID-19, and how the severity of the illness in the two groups compare. **Recent reports are that two vaccines in development – one by Pfizer and one by Moderna – are close to applying for EUAs.**

### **Deployment**

While the news about the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines is encouraging, it is important to remember that there is a big difference between having a vaccine and getting a vaccine into millions of Americans. Fortunately, government supported manufacturing of vaccines is already underway. Although financially risky to the government, this is necessary so that doses can get manufactured and distributed – in glass vials, in dry ice, with needles, syringes, and all the supplies required to administer the vaccine – in hundreds of thousands of “kits” as soon as an EUA is given.

Currently, the national plan is for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to distribute vaccines from multiple manufacturers to state or city departments of health (referred to as “jurisdictions”) through some combination of corporate partners such as McKesson, group purchasing organizations (GPOs), the vaccine manufacturers themselves, and possibly even with logistical support from the U.S. military. Jurisdictions will then distribute hundreds of vaccine kits to hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies (referred to as “providers”). The vaccine will be given to groups of people based on their level of risk for getting or transmitting the virus, so the first phase will be for frontline healthcare workers (HCWs) and first responders. **Kindred has decided that each of our sites will apply to be a provider for our frontline HCWs, as soon as each state is ready to accept applications.** This process is already underway in several states, and will continue in the weeks ahead.

Over the next few weeks and months, we will learn which vaccines receive an EUA, how many doses can be made in the coming months, and how each state will prioritize groups of people to get the vaccine. Since vaccination is the only path towards herd immunity that doesn't require millions of people to get sick and potentially require hospitalization or die, we can expect a lot of public health officials and employers to strongly encourage all eligible individuals to get vaccinated.

## **Effectiveness**

The concept of herd immunity describes the situation where the disease is still spreading, but for each 100 people who get sick, they give it to less than 100 others because the people they expose can't get infected due to immunity, either from getting the disease or getting the vaccine. Consequently, the disease eventually dies out on its own.

Experts estimate that about 70-75% of the population has to be immune to create herd immunity. Right now, immunity is at about 10% in populations with higher disease rates such as New York City, but less than 10% in places with lower disease rates. That means achieving herd immunity will require a vaccine that is both very effective and very well accepted. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have early results suggesting an effectiveness of greater than 90%, which would be excellent if those rates hold true after more analysis is done.

Right now, only about 50% of the public says they would readily take the vaccine, but the public will probably grow more confident in the safety of the vaccine as more vaccinated people are monitored over longer periods of time. Another issue to consider is how long the protective immunity lasts. Finding that blood antibody levels (serology) last a long time after vaccination is reassuring, but there are other, harder to measure ways the body can become immune, known as T-cell immunity. This is why the research must continue even after an EUA or formal FDA approval is granted.

Since this is a multi-month endeavor, we all should expect the social prevention measures required to limit transmission to remain with us until something close to herd immunity is achieved. This will require approximately 200 million Americans to either become sick and recover, or receive a vaccination. **In simplest terms, that means we all need to continue following the basic safety precautions to which we have adhered over the last few months – wearing masks, practicing social distancing, avoiding crowds, and washing our hands frequently.**

I hope everyone has a safe and happy Thanksgiving holiday. As always, please remember to be safe, be kind, and stay well. We appreciate your dedication and continued support.

Regards,

Ben Breier  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Kindred Healthcare

## **Responses to Frequently Asked Questions**

*Kindred has established a dedicated mailbox ([COVID19EmployeeQuestions@kindred.com](mailto:COVID19EmployeeQuestions@kindred.com)) to collect and answer any questions you may have.*

**For the full list of the most current responses to frequently asked questions and other updates, please check the following page on a regular basis: <https://www.kindredhealthcare.com/employees/covid-19-updates>**