

Virology Newsletter

Winter 2021

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

We want to bring you up to date regarding COVID-19 vaccines. The data thus far do not show significant differences in the vaccine response or side effects in people living with HIV/AIDS, and the vaccine is clearly indicated for you. Unfortunately, supply of the vaccine is limited, and we do not control the distribution of vaccine. This is regulated by the Iowa Department of Public Health and other government groups. Nevertheless, we are committed to making the vaccine available as soon as possible for our patients and want to summarize the current status of available vaccines.

The following summarizes key issues and information that we hope will be helpful.

As noted, supply is limited and there are differences in distribution strategies between different states.

Due to the limited supply of vaccine, distribution thus far has gone to healthcare workers, nursing home residents, and people who work in nursing homes. In some states, it is also being given to those who are ≥ 75 years old.

There will be a phased approach to distribution to the general population (including you) and how this will be prioritized remains somewhat unclear. However, it is likely that priority will be given to other “essential workers” and those with conditions that predispose to severe COVID disease. Fortunately, HIV infection (on treatment) has not proven to increase the risk of severe disease in the studies done so far.

The timing of vaccine availability for the general population is not clear and will depend on many factors (production, distribution, etc.). While we hope it will occur sooner, ***we do not expect to be able to offer routine vaccination before May or June, but we hope that this changes.*** The two vaccines that are currently authorized for use have two injections (3 or 4 weeks apart depending on the vaccine), and it takes 7 to 8 weeks after the first injection for optimal protection.

Thus for many of you, protection by the vaccine is not likely to be in place before summer or fall.



We plan to send out notification as soon as we know that we are able to provide the vaccine in our clinic for those of you who are signed up for e-mail distribution of our newsletter. If you would like to be included in this notification and are not on our e-mail list, please notify Tracy Peters, Program Nurse (319-335-7605) or contact us by e-mail at tracy-peters@uiowa.edu. If a COVID vaccination opportunity arises for you outside of our clinic, we fully support your pursuing that option as well.

For your information, there is a research study starting on another COVID-19 vaccine at the University of Iowa that may offer vaccination sooner; however, it is a research study. If you are interested in learning more about this trial, please contact the Vaccine and Treatment Evaluation Unit at 319-356-4848 for more information. Explain to the Research Unit that you are a patient in our UIHC Virology Clinic when you call.

Helpful Links:

Iowa Dept of Public Health Vaccine Info: <https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus/Vaccine>

Additional Covid vaccine info: https://uihc.org/covid-19-vaccine-information?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=noonnews

COVID-19 Vaccination FAQ's

Are the vaccines recommended for people living with HIV?

Yes, we are recommending vaccination.

Is COVID vaccine safe for people living with HIV?

Although the data is limited, no concerning issues were reported among people living with HIV who participated in COVID vaccine trials.

CDC and many HIV experts, including providers in UIHC virology clinic, strongly recommend this vaccination.

Of note, the participants who enrolled in the vaccine trials were "with stable disease". Therefore, please continue to take your HIV medications and keep your virus well suppressed.

Will people living with HIV be prioritized to receive the vaccine before the general population?

No, not at this point. The data shows that people living with HIV are not shown to be a higher risk of acquiring the virus and those that have acquired the virus are not at a greater risk of serious illness from the virus.

You may qualify for the priority groups if you are healthcare workers, older than 75 years old, or working as essential workers, or have a concomitant medical condition that are at high risk of severe COVIDS.

Ref: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm695152e2.htm>

My husband and I are considering trying to conceive. Should we still get the vaccination?

Yes, the vaccine is recommended, and the data has shown that people that conceive or are pregnant and receive the vaccine, have had no adverse effect on the fetus. This is true for people who acquire the virus while pregnant/conceiving. The fetus is not affected. However, the mother may be at a higher risk of severe illness if she acquires COVID infection while pregnant. It is always good to check with your OB/GYN regarding their recommendations.

CDC information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>

Otherwise, to decrease the risk of HIV transmission to your future child, please continue to be adherence with your medications and keep your virus well suppressed.

I am coming to clinic soon. Can I get the vaccine when I come?

This is very tightly regulated at this time, so this is not yet available. You will be notified when we are able to start vaccinating. If you are able to get this through your work or local provider before we are able to administer it please take advantage of that opportunity and slip us an email letting us know what vaccine you received and when you received it so we can document it. Wherever you get your first vaccine is where you will need to report to get the second vaccine.

Note that the plan for COVID vaccine distribution regulated by Iowa Department of Health and other government groups.

For further information, you can visit <https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus/Vaccine/Information-for-the-Public> or by calling IDPH at 211

For general information about the COVID vaccine, you can visit <https://uihc.org/covid-19-vaccine-information>

How much will it cost to receive the COVID-19 vaccine once available?

Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccine providers may charge an administration fee, covered by most insurance, or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

What should I do while waiting for the COVID vaccine?

Continue the good prevention practices by wearing masks, keeping up with social distancing, frequently washing your hands, covering cough and sneezes, cleaning/disinfecting the frequently touched surfaces, and monitoring your symptoms. Adhere to your HIV medication! Protect yourself from other respiratory illness by getting the flu shot .

Be Prepared



With the anticipation of the COVID vaccines becoming available, we need to make sure that we are prepared to get the vaccine once it is available. If you haven't received your flu shot yet, please get in and get this done. The same holds true for any other vaccine that you may be due for. The body can mount the best antibody response through vaccination and these work the best if they are spread out from each other.

Clinic Options

Due to the pandemic, we have been offering telemedicine visits. If you have an upcoming appointment and would prefer to have a telemedicine visit, we are happy to accommodate. Please reach out to us @ 319-356-7605 and let us know that you would prefer to change your appointment to telemedicine. We can conduct these visits via telephone, or My Chart video visits. If you are due for laboratory assessments, we are happy to send these orders to a local lab or you can come here (or IRL) to get these done. If we have enough notice (2 weeks) you can get your labs done prior to your visit and get the results at your visit. Please be advised that not all patients can be managed through telemedicine, so if you are having acute health problems, that need a face to face visit, we will be asking you to come in. **We are open for business** and welcome face to face visits, even if you are not having an acute health issue. The option is yours. We want to care for you in a safe manner and can do this either by telemedicine or face to face visits, whichever you are most comfortable with. <https://uihc.org/telehealth-video-visits>.

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is designed to assist low-income families with meeting the cost of home heating. Individuals/Families must meet income eligibility requirements to receive assistance through this program. Applications will be accepted on a first come/ first serve basis at your local Community Action Agency. Disabled and Elderly households can start to apply on October 1st, 2020. You may also apply on October 2, 2020 if you have a disconnection notice or your service is currently disconnected. All other eligible households may submit applications from November 1, 2020- April 30, 2021. You will need to bring three months' worth of income, your social security card, and copies of your heating/ electric bills with you when you apply. Please contact your local Community Action Agency for their hours of availability. If you need help locating the agency responsible for LIHEAP in your county, please contact a member of our social work team. See below for basic eligibility information:

Size of Household	Annual Gross Income
1	\$22,330
2	\$30,170
3	\$38,010

Welcome to our new case managers Viri and Sade!



Hello, I'm Viri Estudillo Gil, and I'm a new case manager with the Ryan White program. I was born and raised in Mexico, therefore my primary language is Spanish. I moved to the US when I was 14 years old, and lived in Columbus Jct., IA for five years. After graduating high school, I started college at the University of Iowa, where I got my B.A. in Social Work. In my free time I like to work out, watch tv, and enjoy the outdoors (if weather allows it). I look forward to working with an incredible community. (pictured left)



My name is Sade Creach and I will be a new Case Manager for the UIHC HIV Program. I am happy to be a part of this team. I love building rapport with my clients and getting to know them well. I was originally born in London, England and moved here when I was 7 years old. I love cooking, going on adventures with my kids and spending time with family and friends. (pictured right)



What's Changed?

The year 2020 has been a rough one. While the new year might not provide a completely clean slate, it traditionally motivates people to set new goals and often change behaviors. This can lead to a lot of ambitious goal setting, but sometimes we forget to look at the basics of our daily routines, like sleep schedules, meals, patterns of physical activity, etc.

How does your daily routine now compare to your daily routine before the pandemic? For many of us, a lot of the changes are out of our control, or we've made the changes to adapt to changes in our environments, but now can be a time to reflect on whether aspects of our routine are still helpful or necessary. It can also be a chance to reflect on positive aspects of routine that we may have been neglecting. These are some helpful questions to check in on.

Have I made changes to morning / evening hygiene routines?

Do I eat meals at mostly regular times? How many meals do I eat, and what do I eat?

When do I get up? When do I go to bed? Do I take more naps? Fewer naps?

Do I interact with others throughout the day?

Do I take time to get up and move or do light exercise?

Do I get outside?

Ambitious goals are still good but checking in on the basics will make it easier to take on some of the bigger challenges this year!

Insurance Happenings

- As a reminder, ADAP insurance changed for many from Medica to BCBS. Additionally, some Medica members changed plans as well. Please remember to get a copy of your new insurance card to your case manager so this information can be updated with NSP and UIHC.
- Some Medica plans still show active for 3 months after cancelling them. Please remember to not use this insurance with outside pharmacies or provider offices so they do not bill the wrong insurance.
- If you switch Medicare Part D plans for 2021 you will be receiving new cards in the mail. Please update your pharmacy with this new information, and your case manager if you have one.

Turning 65????

If you are turning 65 soon or have recently turned 65, you are eligible for Medicare. Please contact Angela to discuss your transition plan from your current insurance to Medicare. Every person's insurance situation is different and Angela can help you determine the best insurance plan for you and your situation.

REFILL Reminders

Due to potential changes with insurance, formularies, prior authorizations and designated pharmacies this time of year—please request refills earlier than usual. Thank you in advance!

Support Group:

Consider joining UIHC's Support Group for People Living with HIV. We are focused on connecting with others in a time when it is exceptionally difficult. Share experiences, resources, coping strategies, and just chatting and getting to know others.

When: First Wednesday of the month from 4:00pm-5:30pm

Where: Online for now!

Contact: Daniel Czachura, BHC

Phone: 319-383-3621

Email: daniel-czachura@uiowa.edu



PrEP is an important tool in the campaign to end the HIV epidemic. Please refer anyone in Iowa that you believe could benefit from PrEP. Iowa TelePrEP can help people with Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance and those who are uninsured get no or very low cost PrEP. We offer telehealth visits at the clients' convenience, and meds delivered to their home. Call or text 319-930-9093, visit our website at pre-iowa.org/teleprep, or ask to talk to Dena in clinic.



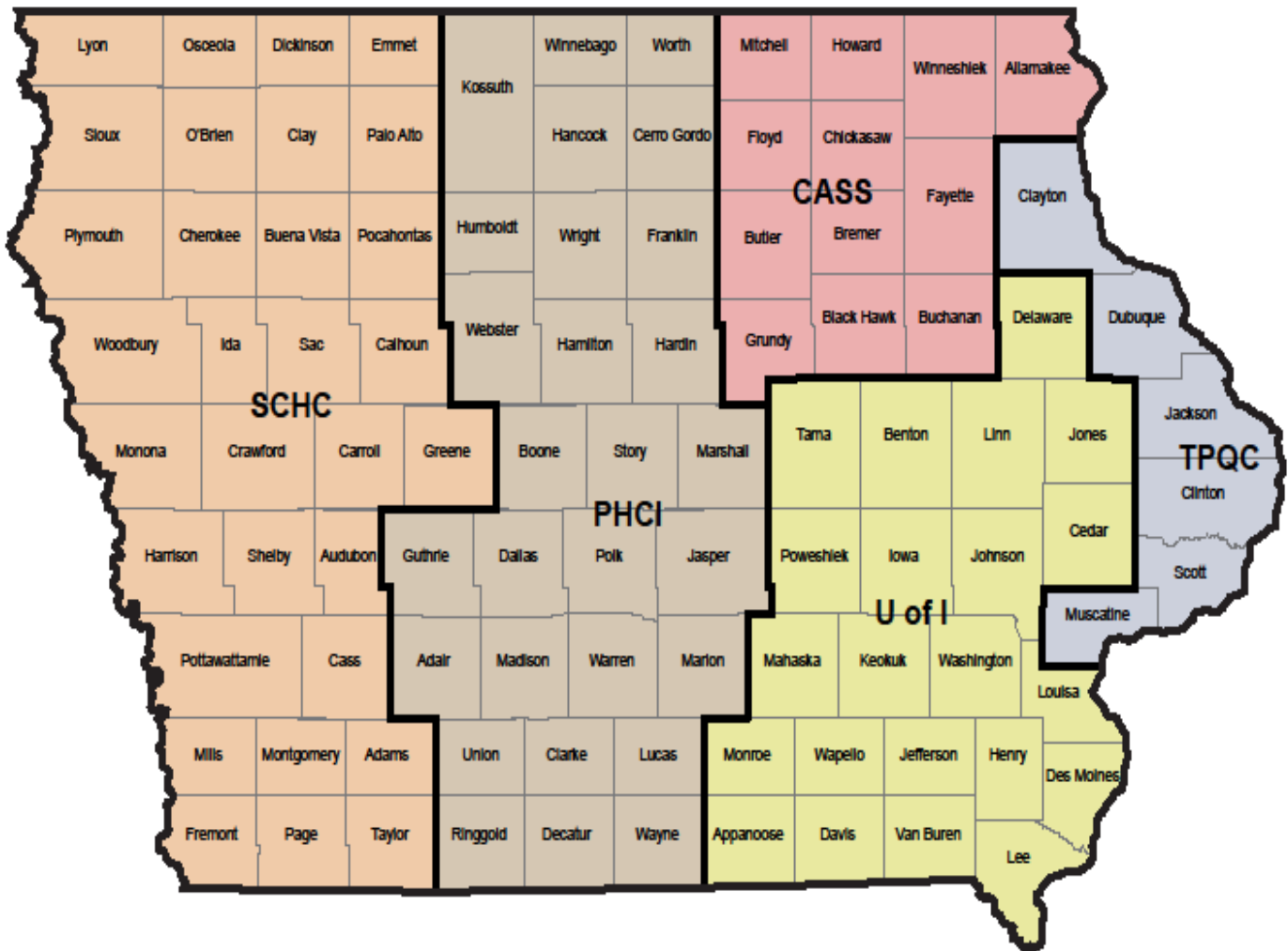


HOPWA



Having trouble maintaining your housing due to an emergent situation such as job loss or illness? You may be eligible for HOPWA assistance. Please contact the HOPWA provider in your area to see if assistance is available. UIHC currently offers assistance with long-term rental assistance (TBRA), short-term rent, mortgage, and utility assistance (STRMU), and permanent housing placement services (PHP) (deposit and/ or 1st months rent). If you live in the U of I area, contact Jennifer at 319-467-5662.

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)



Stouland Community
Health Center (SCHC)
1021 Nebraska Street
PO Box 5410
Sioux City, IA 51102
(712) 252-2477

Primary Health Care, Inc.
(PHCI)
1200 University Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50314
(515) 248-1517

Cedar AIDS Support
System (CASS)
2101 Kimball Avenue
Suite 2880
Waterloo, IA 50704-2880
(319) 727-2002

University of Iowa
(U of I)
200 Hawkins Drive
Iowa City, IA 52242
(319) 467-5662

The Project of the Quad
Cities (TPQC)
1701 River Drive #110
Moline, IL 61265
(309) 762-5433

PITCH Virtual Meet and Greet

4th Thursday of the Month at 6 pm CT starting on
April 23, 2020

www.pitchiowa.com

EDUCATE

UNITE

ADVOCATE

ASSIST

EMPOWERMENT

LIVE!!!!



Save the Dates –

- Jan 28th -- Nutrition on a Budget
- Feb 25th-- Tax Time and Unemployment
- March 25th-- Hobbies and Habits for Mental Health
- April 22nd -- Living Will and Power of Attorney

Register in advance for this meeting:

<http://bit.ly/PITCHMeetandGreet>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. You only need to register once and will get notices of all meetings.

PITCH (Positive Iowans Taking Charge) is a statewide non-profit organization with a clear mission: To create an atmosphere where HIV+ people can unite, advocate, and assist other HIV+ people for better health and wellness.





SAVE THE DATE

AIDS WATCH

MARCH 22 - 23, 2021

AIDSWATCH IS THE LARGEST, CONSTITUENT-BASED NATIONAL HIV ADVOCACY EVENT. WHILE TYPICALLY HELD IN PERSON IN WASHINGTON, D.C., AIDSWATCH WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY IN MARCH DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. EACH YEAR AIDSWATCH BRINGS TOGETHER HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AND THEIR ALLIES TO LEARN ABOUT THE LATEST POLICY ISSUES, MESSAGING STRATEGY AND ADVOCACY TACTICS.



CONTACT US



- To schedule a clinic appointment at UIHC, call **319-356-8133** and for Cedar Falls Outreach, call **319-356-8133**.
- For lab results or health related questions, please call Amber Phelps, MA at **319-335-7218**.
- For refill requests, have your pharmacy fax a request to **319-356-3004** or contact the Infectious Disease refill line at **319-356-8133**.
- For insurance questions, contact Angela Speers at **319-335-7309** or **319-333-8714**.
- If you have a medical emergency during the 8am-5pm work day, please try contacting Amber or your provider. If Amber and your provider are unavailable, you may call the hospital operator at **319-356-1616** and ask for the Infectious Disease doctor on call.
- For medication questions, contact Dena Dillon at **319-541-0335**.
- Sub-contracted Ryan White case management services now offered at Great River Medical Center in W. Burlington at **1-319-800-5430**, and River Hills Community Health Center in Ottumwa at **1-319-800-5561**.
- Social work questions and concerns should be directed to:
 - Malory Dreasler** at **319-356-1545** or **319-359-9181**
 - Katie Vodraska** at **319-353-7173** or **319-383-6563**
 - Jennifer Keeler** at **319-467-5662** or **319-499-7963**
 - Tricia Kroll** at **319-384-7307** or **319-383-1759**
 - Kari Vrbanc** at **319-467-5655** or **319-471-2123**
 - Sade Creach** at **319-335-7444** or **319-331-0031**
 - Viri Estudillo Gil** at **319-353-8951** or **319-930-9829**

If you have questions or would like more information about our HIV program please contact **Amber Phelps** at **319-335-7218**.

Case Manager Malory will be on *maternity leave* from late February-early May 2021. Her case managed clients will receive instructions for an alternate contact person during that time.