

## Stowe Personalized Medical Care

Update: January 7, 2021

**Update for Patients of Stowe Personalized Medical Care from Dr. Bisbee** I am sorry for not getting this out yesterday but I got very distracted.

### COVID-19 In Vermont: Latest Updates (as 1-7-2021)

- Cases: **8,158** (including **106** new cases reported yesterday)
- Location: **32** cases reported in Chittenden County, **17** in Windsor County, **14** in Rutland County and **10** in Bennington County.
- Hospitalized: **33**, including **6** in the ICU.
- Percent positive seven-day average: **2.7%**
- Deaths: **152** (including **3** new deaths reported yesterday)
- Deputy Health Commissioner Tracy Dolan says a new, more contagious strain of the coronavirus is concerning, but the newly-developed vaccines should still be effective against it.
- Quebec Province will enter **a four-week lockdown starting Saturday.**

**Get more updates and resources at VPR.org | Find A Testing Site | Latest Department Of Health Guidance**

**When will I get the vaccine?** Recent article in Vermont Digger reports that Vermont is going to vaccinate elderly people (over 75) AND patients with chronic conditions. The link to this article:

<https://vtdigger.org/2021/01/04/elderly-are-next-to-get-vaccine-leaving-essential-workers-waiting-and-worried/>

The CDC recommended that all "essential workers" be vaccinated in the 1b group. But, if Vermont did this, Vermont would be like Florida with lines of people for hours trying to get the vaccine. It has been estimated that 2/3 of the population of Vermont are considered essential workers. Vermont will be going to vaccinate in stages. Patient over 75 will be the next in line.

In December, a large pharmacy company came into nursing homes across Vermont and most patients were vaccinated. The COVID vaccine was also offered to the staff. The same pharmacy company will be expanding to give vaccines to assisted living and retirement homes and Copley Woodlands will vaccinate the residents on January 25, 2021. Three clinics, 3 weeks apart are planned.

**Vermont has decided to vaccinate all people over 75 years of age and patients who have chronic medical conditions (not vaccinate essential workers) in the next phase.**

According to the CDC, Adults of any age with the following conditions **are at increased risk** of severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19:

- [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](#)
- [Obesity \(body mass index \[BMI\] of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or higher but < 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>\)](#)
- [Severe Obesity \(BMI ≥ 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>\)](#)
- [Pregnancy](#)
- [Sickle cell disease](#)
- [Smoking](#)
- [Type 2 diabetes mellitus](#)

Based on what we know at this time, adults of any age with the following conditions **might be at an increased risk** for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19:

- [Asthma \(moderate-to-severe\)](#)
- [Cerebrovascular disease \(affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain\)](#)
- [Cystic fibrosis](#)
- [Hypertension or high blood pressure](#)
- [Immunocompromised state \(weakened immune system\) from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines](#)
- [Neurologic conditions, such as dementia](#)
- [Liver disease](#)
- [Overweight \(BMI > 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, but < 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>\)](#)
- [Pulmonary fibrosis \(having damaged or scarred lung tissues\)](#)
- [Thalassemia \(a type of blood disorder\)](#)
- [Type 1 diabetes mellitus](#)

**When will I be able to get a vaccine?** That is the big question. The first shipments of Pfizer and Moderna vaccine won't cover everyone. The next shipment will hopefully cover two vaccines for each healthcare worker and Nursing Home patient in Vermont. The next group to get vaccinated will be 1b (people over 75 and people with chronic conditions).

We do not know the exact date when the vaccine will arrive in Vermont for 1b patients. One thing we know for sure, primary care offices including Stowe Personalized Medical Care are in-line for receiving vaccinations for this next phase. We will contact you as soon as we know when the vaccine will arrive.

**SPMC is registered as a dispensing clinic** for the COVID vaccine as we have met all the criteria.

**Which vaccine should I get?** The answer is "the first one you can get" as there is not going to be an abundance of vaccines in early 2021, and it may take months for other doses to become

available. Both of Pfizer vaccine and Moderna vaccine have similar side effects and are equally as effective. There are concerns about getting the Pfizer vaccine if you have a history of severe allergic reactions such as anaphylaxis.

The U.S. government purchased 100 million doses from Pfizer in July 2020, which falls short of the total number needed to vaccinate the country. To vaccinate the entire US population, we would need 660 million vaccines but obviously not all will agree to get vaccinated. Pfizer reports they will be able to fulfill the agreement to supply (the first) 100 million doses by March. The Government has apparently purchased more vaccines from Pfizer in the past month but it will take a few months to get those as well. We can only hope other vaccine companies are close behind for EUA approval.

**What are the differences in the vaccines?** Pfizer vaccine require two doses, 21 days apart. Pfizer comes in a 5 dose multi-use vial which has to be used within 5 hours after diluting it. Moderna doesn't require dilution and two vaccines are required, 28 days apart. Moderna is a 10 dose vial and is much easier to store as it only requires a (specialized) refrigerator whereas Pfizer requires a very low freezer (-100 degrees)

The US Government purchased several vaccine options in 2020 with millions of doses in the pipe line. The US has invested multi-millions of dollars to help companies ramp up development. Fourteen vaccines are being narrowed down to 7 vaccine companies to speed the development. Besides the Pfizer and Moderna, Novavax, AstraZeneca, GlaxoSmithKline, and Johnson & Johnson all are working hard to get Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). Dr. Bisbee recommends that you get the first vaccine available to you.

**What have we learned in 2020:** Masks protect you from getting droplets that can infect you and it also protects the people that you come in close contact with from getting the virus. Even though the vaccine is coming soon, mask wearing and keeping a safe distance and washing hands is the main tool we have to stop the Pandemic.

The CDC recommends no travel. The CDC also warn that college students should stay in place and not travel home. People should not travel to Vermont but if they do, they should quarantine for 7 days and then get tested before they are around others or quarantine for a full 14 days.

**What if I am exposed to a case of COVID?** If you have been exposed to a known COVID case, it is recommended to get a test as soon as possible, then isolate from others and get a second COVID test 7 days later. If both tests are negative then you can come out of quarantine.

**Definition of Quarantine:** Can I fly back to Vermont and live with my parents until the 7 days of quarantining are done? Can I do a 7 day quarantine out of state and then I don't have to quarantine in Vermont? Can I drive up to Vermont without stopping and then I don't need to Quarantine? Can I rent an Air B&B in Vermont and just go to the grocery store and gas station and a few places until the 7 days are up? Most people realize that there are no "COVID police" to enforce compliance. Following the recommendations are voluntary and many are breaking the rules. There seems to be a "reality gap" when it comes to personal decisions regarding

COVID. Please discuss your specific questions with Dr. Bisbee or other qualified Health Care Providers.

We can get through this together and protect each other by wearing a mask and socially distancing and resist the temptation to be in group gatherings. We all know this is a sacrifice and it is very hard to do this, especially during this traditional holiday season.

**Restart Vermont Travel Restriction:** All Travelers coming to Vermont must quarantine for 7 days and get tested. For up to date information go to <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/restart/cross-state-travel>.

**What if I have a medical problem? The Guidance for Vermonters has not changed:**

1. If you have a medical emergency call 911 or go directly to the hospital.
2. If you are having even mild symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, call your health care provider and ask if you should be tested. Keep your medical provider updated if your symptoms worsen.
3. Maintain physical distancing (at least 6 feet), wash hands and wear a mask when near others, whether inside or outside.
4. Don't travel outside Vermont. <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/restart/cross-state-travel> and it is not recommended to travel within Vermont at this time.
5. Discourage family and friends from traveling to visit from outside Vermont
6. If you have an elective procedure scheduled, discuss this with your primary care physician. Usually these medical procedures can be safely done now.

**Where can I get a test for COVID?** You need an order for most test sites so call Dr. Bisbee's office to get the order sent and to discuss your situation.

**Testing options:** The nasal swab **PCR test** is still the best test to get. There are nasopharyngeal (deep Q-tip test) and anterior nasal swab PCR tests. Both are accurate but it is not easy to get the anterior nasal swab test ordered as they are in short supply. You don't usually get a choice of which test will be done.

The **Antigen test** also referred to as the "quick test", can be used under certain circumstances. There are false negatives and false positives. If a person has a high likelihood of COVID and the antigen test is negative, a PCR test is then recommended to make sure you are really negative. If a person has no symptoms and no recent contact with known COVID patient, the Antigen test is negative it is very reliable that they do not have COVID.

**Antibody testing** has not been shown to be reliable, reproducible. It is not recommended that Antibody status be used to make decisions regarding employment, travel or immunity at this time. You should work with your primary doctor to get the correct test.

**Repeating a COVID test is not recommended** after you have been diagnosed with COVID, as this can be positive for a long time after having COVID even though you are not contagious. The PCR (nasal swab test) can be positive for a much longer time even though you are not contagious. Retesting is not recommended as a positive test after having COVID does not mean you are still contagious.

**How long am I contagious after testing positive?** The CDC says that the concentration of SAR-CoV-2 RNA start to decline after the onset of symptoms. Patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms should stay isolated for 10 days after the onset of symptoms. If you test positive for COVID but don't have symptoms, you are likely not contagious after 10 days. Patients who have moderate to severe COVID symptoms should quarantine for 15 days. A very small number of patients have been shown to be contagious for more than 20 days and are usually quite ill. Talk to your doctor for specific recommendations for your situation.

**Should I put off my medical concerns?** It is not a good idea to put off any significant medical concerns and many of these concerns can be dealt with by talking over the phone or video conferencing with your Health Care Provider. In the next 60-90 days, isolating from others as much as possible is important. Remember, you can always call Dr. Bisbee on his cell phone for urgent questions.

Dr. Bisbee and his staff are seeing patients in the office, one at a time, as long as everyone (staff and patients) wear a mask. We pre-screen to have some reassurance that the patient is not likely to have COVID (no fever sore throat, cough etc). We ask you to wear a mask to keep Dr. Bisbee and the staff safe from catching COVID 19.

Because of the increase incidence of COVID in Vermont and New England, we will not be scheduling face to face/ in office wellness exams and non-urgent medical visits at this time. A 30-60 minute phone conversation can be scheduled which will cover many issues and later a brief physical exam can be scheduled once the COVID surge is under control. We expect the number of COVID cases to continue to rise in January and February. We encourage you to call us for any medical issues or any medical concerns.

**General recommendations:** Patients over 75 should continue to stay at home as much as possible. Patients with chronic medical conditions should be especially careful. A (cloth) mask is recommended when you are near other people. You do not need to wear a mask when you are by yourself, in your car, or outside walking by yourself but have a mask handy if there is a potential for coming within 6 feet of others. Washing hands, as much as possible, and avoid touching your face, your eyes, nose with unwashed hands or gloves. Avoid contact with people that are sick. **Wearing gloves is not necessary.** As soon as you touch something, the glove is just as contaminated as an ungloved hand so you still need to stop touching your face. Frequent use of hand sanitizer is a good thing but when soap and water is available, wash your hands.

**Office Hours:** The office is open 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. Dr. Bisbee is available to help you if you need medical care. You should call ahead as many things can be taken care of by telephone.

**Can I get a Flu shot?** Absolutely, you should call to make arrangements for your flu shot by calling the office. We will come out to your car to administer your influenza shot.

**Staff are safe:** Dr. Bisbee and his staff are tested for COVID 19 on a regular basis. Dr. Bisbee and staff have all had the COVID vaccine #1. We look forward to getting the second dose of the vaccine. We encourage you to get the vaccine as soon as it is available to you.



**Who should go to the Emergency Room?** If you have a life threatening medical issue such as a heart attack or stroke, call 911 without delay. If you are not having life threatening symptoms, call Dr. Bisbee first as he is available by phone 24/7. Patients in Lamoille County without a PCP can call Copley Hospital (802-888-8642) to discuss their individual situation.

**What do we do for now?** It is time to "double down" on CDC recommendations, wear masks, wash hands and try to keep at least 6 feet apart (10 feet is even better) while we continue to vaccinate everyone. Most experts feel that 60-70% of the population needs to be vaccinated to have herd immunity.