

Hospice and Palliative Care Resources for the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 10/27/21

NHPCO has created this update for hospice and palliative care providers to share recent news and helpful links. Please note, these Updates are published when there is helpful news to share.

"You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have."

– Bob Marley

Policy Updates

FDA Takes Additional Actions on the Use of a Booster Dose for COVID-19 Vaccines

The FDA took action to expand the use of a booster dose for COVID-19 vaccines in eligible populations. The agency is amending the emergency use authorizations (EUA) for COVID-19 vaccines to allow for the use of a single booster dose. Read more in the [FDA news release](#).

HHS Actions Add to Efforts to Increase Access to Over-the-Counter COVID-19 Tests

As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to increasing access to COVID-19 testing, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is taking several new actions to help reduce costs, make tests more available, and support bringing more tests to market in the U.S. The National Institutes of Health is investing \$70 million from the American Rescue Plan to help bring more high-quality, at-home tests onto the market. NIH's new Independent Test Assessment Program will establish an accelerated pathway to support FDA evaluation of tests with potential for large-scale manufacturing. Read more in the [HHS news release](#).

FDA Advisory Panel Recommends Pfizer Vaccine for Kids Ages 5 to 11

A panel of independent advisers to the FDA is recommending that the agency issue an emergency use authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in children 5 to 11 years old. The vote was 17 in favor and one abstention. Pfizer's data indicates the vaccine is safe and 90.7% effective in preventing COVID-19 infections in this age group. [Read more from NPR](#).

CMS Update to the Medicaid and CHIP COVID-19 Data Snapshot

CMS has released an update to the Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) COVID-19 data snapshot, which includes data through February 2021. This snapshot provides information on COVID-19 related service utilization by beneficiaries including data on COVID-19 testing, treatment, and acute care use, service use among beneficiaries 18 years of age and younger, services delivered via telehealth, services for mental health and substance use disorders, and reproductive health services for female beneficiaries. [View the PDF slide deck from CMS](#).

Provider Updates

Immunocompromised May Need Fourth COVID-19 Shot

"People with certain health conditions that make them moderately or severely immunocompromised may get a fourth mRNA COVID-19 shot, according to updated guidelines from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC authorized a third dose for certain immunocompromised people 18 and older in August. It said a third dose, rather than a booster -- the CDC makes a distinction between the two -- was necessary because the immunocompromised may not have had a complete immune response from the first two doses," [CNN reports](#).

U.S. Officials Keep Close Watch on 'Delta Plus' COVID Mutation in the U.K.

U.S. health officials are keeping a close eye on an emerging COVID-19 subvariant, dubbed "delta plus," that some scientists say may be more contagious than the already highly transmissible delta variant. The mutation has been detected in the U.S., but there hasn't been a noticeable uptick in delta plus cases nationwide. Global health leaders are urging the public not to panic. Though the emergence of a COVID subtype isn't the same as an entirely new variant evolving, keeping track of delta's progression could allow the medical community to better understand the mutation. [Read more from CNBC](#).

COVID Cases Falling, but Trouble Signs Arise as Winter Looms

"Tumbling COVID-19 case counts have some schools around the US considering relaxing their mask rules, but deaths nationally have been ticking up over the past few weeks, some rural hospitals are showing signs of strain, and cold weather is setting in. The number of new cases nationally has been plummeting since the Delta surge peaked in mid-September. The US is averaging about 73,000 new cases per day, less than half of the nearly 173,000 recorded on September 13. And the number of Americans in the hospital with COVID-19 has plummeted by about half to around 47,000 since early September," [Medscape reports](#).

People Vaccinated Against COVID Less Likely to Die from Any Cause: Study

People who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 are not only less likely to die from the virus, but they're also less likely to die from any cause in the months following vaccination, according to a new study. The report showed that between December 2020 to July 2021, COVID-19 vaccine recipients had lower rates of non-COVID-19 mortality than unvaccinated people, including adjustments for age, race and ethnicity, sex, and geographic location. [Read more in Medscape](#).

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