



# NORTHEAST HEALTH DISTRICT

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## MEDIA RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Georgia Expands COVID-19 Vaccine Availability to Include People Age 65 or Older, Northeast Health District Opens Drive-Through Vaccination Clinic**

**Athens, GA** – Effective January 11<sup>th</sup>, people age 65 and older and first responders – including law enforcement - will be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Previously, the vaccine was only available to healthcare workers and residents of long-term care facilities. Due to the limited quantity of vaccines, the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended that certain priority population groups receive the vaccine first. This tiered method of vaccine distribution will prioritize frontline workers and most vulnerable populations.

In order to meet the increased demand resulting from expansion of the first tier, the Northeast Health District will open an appointment-based, combination COVID-19 testing and vaccination drive-through at a new site, located at 355 Oneta Street in Athens starting January 12, 2021. The Northeast Health District had also operated drive-through COVID-19 testing sites on Mitchell Bridge Road in Athens and at the Winterville Center for Community and Culture. Both of those sites are now closed.

Both testing and vaccination will be provided free of charge at the new site, but appointments are required. To make an appointment for either testing or vaccination, visit [PublicHealthAthens.com](http://PublicHealthAthens.com) or call 706-340-0996. Priority will be given to those who live or work in the Northeast Health District, which includes the following counties: Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton.

“The response has been enormous – which is both wonderful and overwhelming. We are asking for the public’s patience at this time,” noted District Administrator Emily Eisenman. “We have greatly expanded our hotline both in terms of staffing and provider support, but we are receiving thousands of calls a day, and hold times are still long. Anyone who is eligible and submits a registration form on our website will be called within a few days to schedule an appointment, which may be a better option for many.”

W&A Engineering and Southern Mills Partners worked in concert to donate the parking area, tents, and office space necessary for the testing and vaccination facility. “The past year has challenged our community, and when we saw an opportunity to help, we took it,” explained Jon Williams, CEO of W&A Engineering. “We wanted to be involved in the process of vaccine distribution and help end the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“We’ve been fortunate to work with many wonderful community partners. We are grateful to the Athens Area Humane Society for providing a space for testing for so long, and to the City of Winterville stepping up to offer us space. The new partnership with W&A Engineering and Southern Mills Partners on Oneta Street will allow us to double our capacity, getting the vaccine to more people quickly,” explained Nina Cleveland, Emergency Preparedness Director for the Northeast Health District.



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“Vaccination is our number one priority right now, and we are doing everything we can to get the vaccine to as many people as possible, as quickly as we can,” added Dr. Stephen Goggans, District Health Director. “We’ve all been waiting for this moment, and we understand how highly anticipated the vaccine is to so many. Vaccine quantity is still limited, however, and we need everyone to keep doing their part by practicing social distancing and wearing masks or cloth face coverings in public as we work to protect our community.”

Two vaccines have received Emergency Use Authorizations (EUAs) from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) after undergoing rigorous clinical trials demonstrating their safety and effectiveness. Both vaccines were approximately 94-95% effective against COVID-19 in these trials, and both had similar side effects: temporary arm soreness, tiredness, headache, muscle and joint pain, and fever. Side effects went away on their own and were more common after the second dose. The vaccines are given in a two-dose series, several weeks apart.

For local COVID-19 information, visit:

<https://publichealthathens.com/wp/programs/infectious-disease/coronavirus-covid-19-information/>

To locate other COVID-19 vaccination sites, visit:

<https://dph.georgia.gov/locations/covid-vaccination-site>

For accurate and reliable information on COVID-19, visit [dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus](https://dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus) or

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html> .

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