

VA MANILA OUTPATIENT CLINIC
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS

April 16, 2021

1. COVID-19 VACCINATIONS UPDATES:

I am pleased to share with the Veteran community in the Philippines that VA Manila has been allocated its initial supply of COVID-19 vaccine. This has been a tremendous undertaking and required the collaboration of multiple Federal agencies. I appreciate the teamwork among these agencies that has gotten us to this point. VA Manila staff are ready to rise to the challenge to safely vaccinate as many Veterans as quickly as possible. I am also very grateful for the patience and understanding from the Veteran community in the Philippines as we have worked through the many hurdles involved with the shipping and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines to VA's most distant health care facility in a foreign country.

VA Manila has initially been allocated the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. This vaccine has been granted Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for use both in the United States and the Philippines. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is a two-dose series, consisting of an initial vaccine, and a second booster shot 21 days later. Veterans are encouraged to review the [Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine Information Sheet](#) and to consider the risks and benefits of being vaccinated. Veterans should ask their provider about any questions or concerns you may have about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine prior to scheduling, or prior to vaccine administration.

VA Manila will begin providing vaccines to Veterans on Monday, April 19, 2021. Vaccinations will be administered at the VA Manila Outpatient Clinic, 1501 Roxas Boulevard, 1302, Pasay City, Metro Manila, and will be offered by appointment only. **VA Manila will not be able to accommodate Veterans seeking a vaccine on a walk-in basis, as the Clinic remains closed to walk-in appointments at this time.** When a Veteran is eligible to receive a COVID vaccine, a VA Manila staff member will contact the Veteran by phone and secure messenger to offer an appointment in our dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic. Based on available vaccine supplies, VA Manila will offer the COVID-19 vaccine to our enrolled Veteran patients. Due to the overwhelming demand that is anticipated, I am asking Veterans not to call the Clinic to inquire when they can receive a vaccine. Initially, our supplies will be limited, and the Clinic will be working through a prioritized list to offer the vaccine first to those at highest risk

of getting or spreading the coronavirus, or of becoming severely ill from COVID-19. The Clinic will put out frequent email updates keeping the Veteran community up-to-date on developments throughout this process.

VA Manila's clinic scheduling team has already started contacting Veterans based on established prioritization groups. These groups were previously published by the Department of Veterans Affairs in November 2020. The Clinic will strictly adhere to the priority groups initially and will start with Phase 1a and Phase 1b, which includes the following individuals:

Phase 1a includes these eligible Veterans who already receive care at VA:

- Veterans who live in VA community living centers and spinal cord units
- Veterans who live in other long-term care or congregate (group living) settings and don't have access to COVID-19 vaccines in those settings
- Veterans who work in cemeteries
- Veterans who work as health care personnel

Phase 1b includes these eligible Veterans who already receive care at VA:

- Veterans who are at least 75 years old
- Veterans who are essential frontline workers
- Veterans who are experiencing homelessness
- Veterans who receive hemodialysis care
- Veterans who've had a solid organ transplant or who are being considered for transplant
- Veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders
- Veterans who receive chemotherapy treatment in a clinic or hospital

Following the initial prioritization groups 1a and 1b, Veterans in priority group 1c will be accommodated:

Phase 1c includes these eligible Veterans who already receive care at VA:

- Veterans who are ages 65 to 74
- Veterans who are younger than 65 years old and have certain health conditions that the CDC determines put them at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19
- Veterans who the CDC considers essential workers not included in Phase 1b

[Go to the CDC website to read about health problems that increase risk from COVID-19](#)

[Go to the CDC website to read the full list of essential workers](#)

Once VA Manila has been able to offer COVID-19 vaccines to enrolled Veterans in Phases 1a, 1b, and 1c, the Clinic will offer a COVID-19 vaccine to all Veterans enrolled in VA health care in the Philippines. Finally, once that group has been offered their initial vaccines, VA Manila will then offer any remaining supplies of COVID-19 vaccine to other non-enrolled Veterans and other individuals, as supplies permit and as authorized by the SAVE LIVES Act (Public Law 117-4). This law requires VA to continue to prioritize enrolled Veterans in the absence of a readily available supply of vaccine.

When will I be contacted for my vaccine appointment?

VA Manila's initial COVID-19 vaccine allocation is not sufficient to vaccinate all enrolled Veterans at the Clinic, in addition to the non-enrolled Veterans and spouses/caregivers of Veterans living in the Philippines. These groups of individuals were recently authorized to receive vaccine from VA by the SAVE LIVES Act (PL 117-4). At this time, only enrolled Veterans who are active patients at the VA Manila Outpatient Clinic and over the age of 75 will be contacted. It is unlikely that VA Manila will be able to accommodate Veterans younger than 75 with our initial allocation. As additional supplies of vaccine are allocated to VA Manila and shipped, the Clinic will work to vaccinate other Veterans based on the priority groups outlined above. However, it may be several weeks or even several months before the Clinic receives a second allocation and shipment of vaccine.

Veterans, spouses, and caregivers in lower priority groups who may have an opportunity to receive a vaccine from their Local Government Units or Departments of Health in the Philippines are encouraged to consider receiving their COVID-19 vaccine from these sources. Veterans who will be returning to the United States in the near future may also choose to receive a vaccine from VA or community provider while stateside. Regardless of the source, the best COVID-19 vaccine you can receive is the one that you can get in your arm.

How to stay up to date on COVID-19 Vaccines.

To get timely COVID-19 vaccine updates in English and Tagalog, please visit: www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine. Please note at this time, the Keep Me Informed Tool, also known as the "sign up" feature, is not compatible with Philippine Postal Codes. This tool only works with U.S. zip codes. VA Manila is developing our own local resource to allow Veterans, spouses, and caregivers to alert VA Manila that you are interested in receiving a COVID-19 vaccine from

OPC. In the meantime, please do not use the 'sign up' tool, as this information likely will not reach VA Manila. We intend to share information about how you can let VA Manila know you'd like a vaccine in the next few days. Also, look out for regular email updates about Manila OPC's unique vaccine rollout process.

As always, if you need any assistance, please email your primary care team in MyHealthVet, or you are welcome to contact me directly: daniel.gutkoski2@va.gov.

Please continue to stay healthy and safe and continue vigilantly practicing the best strategies to prevent and spread COVID-19 infections – Washing your hands, Watching your distance from other people, and Wearing a mask.

Your VA Manila Team

Attachments (2)

VA Manila COVID Vaccine Information Fact Sheet

US FDA Vaccine Information Sheet – Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine

Daniel Gutkoski, MHA

Clinic Manager, VA Manila Outpatient Clinic

US Embassy to the Philippines, Seafont Compound

1501 Roxas Boulevard

1302 Pasay City, Metro Manila

Direct: +63 (02) 8396-3735 Toll Free: #MyVA (#6982)