

# The DPH Bulletin

From the Delaware Division of Public Health

December 2020



Bayhealth nurse Elizabeth Cote, RN received the first COVID-19 vaccination on December 14 at Kent General Hospital in Dover, Delaware. Photo courtesy of the State of Delaware.

## COVID-19 vaccine arrives in Delaware

Delaware received its first shipment of the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine on December 14 and a second shipment on December 16.

“The Pfizer vaccine’s arrival is the first step in a process of getting back to our pre-pandemic normal,” said Governor John Carney. “The vaccine’s arrival does not mean we are in the clear. In fact, now more than ever, we need to step up our efforts to keep each other safe. That means wear a mask, wash your hands, and do not gather with your friends and family outside of your household. We know that’s hard, particularly at this time of year, but we are almost through this.”

While the Division of Public Health (DPH) does not plan to mandate the vaccine, it strongly encourages people, particularly health care workers, to get vaccinated once doses become available.

Most of the initial 8,775 Pfizer vaccine doses received this week have or will be distributed to the state’s six health care systems to vaccinate front-line health care providers. The general public can expect to receive vaccines in the spring or summer of 2021 through their primary health care providers, health centers and pharmacies. Children under the age of 16 are not approved to get the vaccine.

The Pfizer vaccine was tested on more than 40,000 Americans, including people of color, in three clinical trials. It has a 90 percent effectiveness rate with minor side effects such as muscle soreness and redness. The Pfizer vaccine does not contain a live virus and cannot give individuals COVID-19.

Individuals can email their questions concerning the vaccine to [Vaccine@Delaware.gov](mailto:Vaccine@Delaware.gov).

## Free mail-order naloxone now available for those struggling with addiction

Delawareans struggling with addiction can now order free naloxone by mail, thanks to the efforts of DPH’s Office of Health Crisis Response (OHCR). The life-saving medication, also known by its brand name, Narcan, can reverse opioid drug overdoses by restoring someone’s breathing that has become suppressed from an overdose.

Mail-order naloxone is available through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the New York-based harm-reduction nonprofit NEXT Distro. NEXT Distro operates in 35 states and has distributed free naloxone to 16,000 households in the United States since 2018. DPH will receive the request from NEXT Distro’s virtual platform and will send naloxone within a few days, keeping contact information confidential.

Increasing access to naloxone is critical to preventing overdose deaths as more people are struggling with anxiety, depression, and financial stress stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Receiving in-person support and treatment is more challenging due to social distancing, which prevents meeting at in-person support groups.



According to the *Delaware Overdose Fatality Commission 2018 Annual Report*, 79 percent of the overdoses studied occurred in residences, and naloxone was not available 93 percent of the time. OHCR reminds people that they have “The Power to Save a Life” by having Narcan available and downloading the free OpiRescue DE app for step-by-step instructions on its use.

To order naloxone by mail, visit the Overdose Prevention page on [HelpsHereDE.com](https://www.helpshereDE.com) and access NEXT Distro’s Delaware program. Individuals must watch a video, take a short quiz, and complete a request form.

During addiction or mental health emergencies, call the DHSS 24/7 Delaware Hope Line at 1-833-9-HOPEDE.



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
Division of Public Health

## CDC: Excessive alcohol use poses risk to women's health

Alcohol affects women differently than men, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Although men are more likely to drink alcohol and consume larger amounts, biological differences in body structure and chemistry lead most women to absorb more alcohol and take longer to metabolize it.

The CDC warns that women who drink excessive amounts of alcohol are at risk of violence including homicide, suicide, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence. Excessive drinking can result in risky sexual behaviors, unintended pregnancies, miscarriages, and stillbirths, according to the CDC.

The CDC lists these long-term health problems for women who drink excessively: cirrhosis and alcohol-related liver diseases, cognitive decline and shrinkage of the brain, damage to the heart muscle, and increased risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and colon. Alcohol use is also associated with breast cancer. The CDC defines binge drinking for women when four or more drinks are consumed in about two hours, leading to a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08 g/dl or greater; and heavy drinking as eight or more drinks per week.

No alcohol – including all wine and beer – is safe to consume during pregnancy or while trying to become pregnant because it can cause miscarriage or stillbirth and greatly increases the chances of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), which the CDC says is associated with intellectual disabilities and birth defects. Some FASD signs and symptoms listed by the CDC are low body weight, poor coordination and attention spans, hyperactive behavior, poor memory, and difficulty in school (especially with math), and speech and language delays.

For more information about women and alcohol use disorder, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/womens-health.htm>. For FASD information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/index.html>. For free 24/7 counseling, coaching, therapy, and links to mental health, addiction, and crisis services, visit <https://www.helpsherede.com> or call the Delaware Hope Line at [833-9-HOPEDE](tel:833-9-HOPEDE).



## State's cancer mortality rates decrease between 2002-2006 and 2012-2016

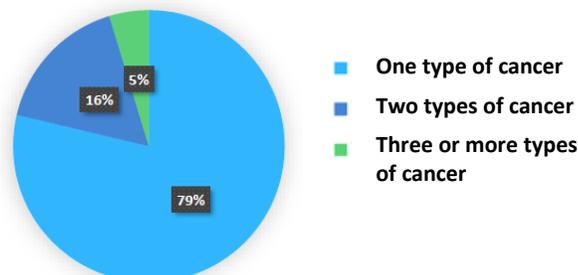
Over the last decade, Delaware's mortality rate for all cancer sites combined (all-site cancer) declined 10 percent between the five-year periods of 2002-2006 and 2012-2016, according to the latest cancer data released by DPH. In the same time span, Delaware's all-site cancer mortality rate also declined for African American males and females and Hispanic females, which DPH attributed to increased screening and early detection efforts. Additionally, mortality rates decreased for female breast, colorectal, lung, prostate, and Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma. For the most recent five-year period of 2012-2016, the state's all-site cancer mortality rate was 8 percent higher than the U.S. rate.

[Cancer Incidence and Mortality in Delaware, 2012-2016](#) provides data for all-site cancer and eight site-specific cancer types: breast, colorectal, lung, melanoma, Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, prostate, thyroid, and uterine. It also includes information about risk factors, screening, state of diagnosis, data trends, and a section on cancer survivorship in Delaware. [A secondary analysis of all-site cancer incidence rates by census tract](#) accompanies the report.

Regarding incidence, or diagnosis of new cancer cases, in 2012-2016, Delaware remained ranked second highest nationally for all-site cancer incidence, which was statistically significantly higher than the U.S. Delaware males rank third compared to U.S. males and Delaware females rank fifth in the U.S. compared to U.S. females.

For information about DPH's cancer prevention and treatment work, call the Delaware Comprehensive Cancer Control Program at 302-744-1020 or visit [www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/dpc/cancer.html](http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/dpc/cancer.html). To learn how to prevent, detect, and treat chronic diseases, visit the Healthy Delaware website: [HealthyDelaware.org](http://HealthyDelaware.org). Read the Delaware Cancer Consortium's recommendations at [www.healthydelaware.org/Consortium](http://www.healthydelaware.org/Consortium).

### Percentage of cancer among cancer survivors, Delaware, 2018



Source: Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Delaware Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 2018.