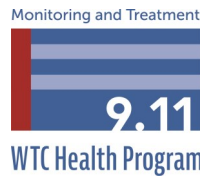




Winter 2021 Edition



The Responder Report

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINE

At this time, The WTC Health Program is **NOT** an authorized provider for administering the COVID-19 vaccine. Distribution and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine is being coordinated by each state.

Please visit your local health department’s webpage for distribution plans and locations.

Turn to page 3 for more details!

HOW TO OBTAIN YOUR FLU SHOT THROUGH THE WTC HEALTH PROGRAM

The WTC Health Program encourages all members to receive the flu vaccine this year.

This year, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is even more important to protect yourself against the flu by getting the vaccine.

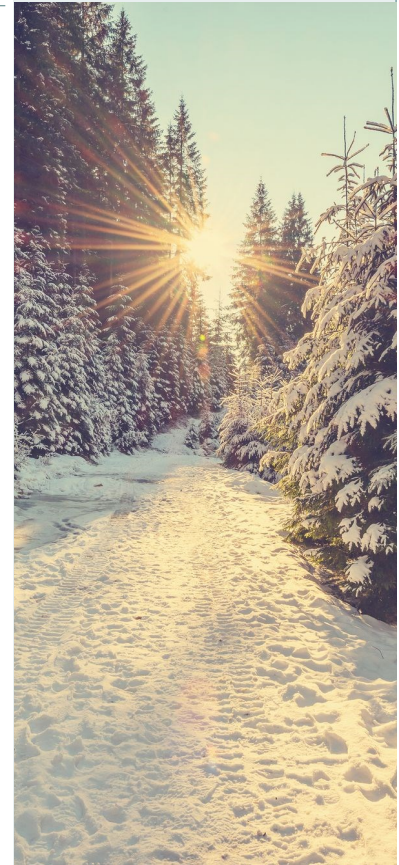
All flu vaccines (flu shot and nasal spray) are covered by the WTC Health Program for all members at no cost to you. You do not need a prescription.

For more information, please turn to page 2!

VIRTUAL GROUPS ARE STARTING THIS SPRING!

Social distancing and staying at home during a pandemic can be tough. All though we are all suffering from “pandemic fatigue,” it is important to continue these safe practices.

But don’t worry, we are here to help! To learn about some of the virtual support groups starting Spring 2021 coordinated by our Rutgers Clinical Center of Excellence’s Mental Health Team, please turn to page 7!



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

How to Get the Flu Shot	2
COVID-19 Vaccine	3
COVID-19 & the WTCHP	4
VCF Updates	6
Virtual Groups	7
Tasty Recipes	8
Clinic Operating Status	9

WELLNESS TIPS

- > Get Your Flu Shot
- > Wear Your Mask
- > Follow CDC COVID-19 Guidelines
- > Take a Walk or Go for a Run
- > Mindfulness Meditation
- > Yoga and/or Light Exercising
- > Video Chat with Friends and Family
- > Maintain a Healthy Diet
- > Join a Virtual Group or Class

CCE members: How to get this year's flu vaccine at no cost



The WTC Health Program encourages all members to receive the flu vaccine this year. Each year, research indicates which types of flu (known as strains) will be most common during the upcoming flu season and a vaccine is developed to protect against those strains. This year, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is extra important to protect yourself against the flu by getting the vaccine.

All flu vaccines (flu shot and nasal spray) are covered at no cost by the WTC Health Program for all members. You do not need a prescription.

Why you should get a flu vaccine

Getting a flu vaccine this year will help prevent or reduce the severity of the flu. This will help you stay out of hospitals and doctor offices, preserving key resources for COVID-19 care.

Please note: The flu vaccine is sometimes not recommended for those with specific health conditions or those receiving certain types of treatment. Follow the recommendation of your primary care physician or your Program provider.



Credit: iStock/SDI Productions

For more information about the flu, and how to prevent it, visit www.cdc.gov/flu.

How to get your flu vaccine at no cost

First consider whether you should get the flu vaccine.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone aged 6 months of age and older should be vaccinated, especially if you are at risk of developing serious flu complications.* If you are unsure, talk with your primary care physician or Program provider.

Next, follow the instructions below:

- 1 Call your pharmacy ahead of time to see if they offer the flu vaccine and can process the claim before you go.
- 2 Over the phone, provide the pharmacist with your WTC Health Program pharmacy benefit information.
- 3 Let the pharmacy know they will need to call Optum (1-855-640-0005) to process the claim.
- 4 Follow your pharmacy's instruction on walk-in hours or scheduling an appointment.

Please do not visit your WTC Health Program clinic for a flu vaccine. Program clinics have strict COVID-19 precautions in place and are prioritizing appointments for WTC-related care. However, a Program clinic may be able to administer a flu vaccine during a WTC-related monitoring or treatment visit.

*Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/whoshouldvax.htm>

USEFUL WEBPAGES

- ⇒ **WTC Health Program COVID-19 Page:** www.cdc.gov/wtc/covid19.html
- ⇒ **Mental Health Resources:** www.cdc.gov/wtc/mentalhealth.html
- ⇒ **Social Services Resources:** www.cdc.gov/wtc/socialassistance.html
- ⇒ **Rutgers Clinical Center of Excellence Facebook Page:**
⇒ www.facebook.com/rutgerswtchp
- ⇒ **WTC Health Program Facebook Page:** www.facebook.com/WTCHealthProgram
- ⇒ **WTC Health Program Twitter Page:** www.twitter.com/wtchealthprgm
- ⇒ **Rutgers Clinical Center of Excellence Webpage:**
www.eohsi.rutgers.edu/centers/world-trade-center-health-program



*“Happiness is a state a mind. It’s just according to the way you look at things”
-Walt Disney*

COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

At this time, The WTC Health Program is **NOT** an authorized provider for administering the COVID-19 vaccine. Distribution and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine is being coordinated by each state.

All WTC Health Program members are encouraged to visit the CDC’s COVID-19 vaccine webpage [here](#) for information about COVID-19 vaccines, including authorizations, recommendations, and frequently asked questions.

If you are unsure whether the COVID-19 vaccine is right for you, please contact your healthcare provider.

[Where Can I Receive the Vaccine?](#)

Please visit your local health department website for distributions plans and locations.

Links to health departments in all 50 states, 8 U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia are available in the CDC’s Health Department Directory can be found [here](#).

[Who Can Receive the Vaccine?](#)

Please visit the CDC website for recommendations on who should receive the vaccine.

Please visit your state’s health department website for COVID-19 vaccine information specific to your state. You may fall into one of the prioritization groups described by the CDC or as otherwise defined by your state.

Providers must follow the state (or other applicable jurisdiction) plan to administer COVID-19 vaccines. **Your membership in the WTC Health Program does *NOT* impact your prioritization for the vaccine.**

(www.cdc.gov/wtc/covid19.html, 2021)

[Will the Program Cover the Vaccine?](#)

At this time, you should seek coverage for the vaccine through your primary health insurance.

Please continue checking the WTC Health Program’s webpage [here](#) for WTC Health Program–related updates about the COVID-19 vaccine.

All vaccine doses currently available have been purchased by the federal government with U.S. taxpayer dollars, which means they are provided at no-cost to the American people.

However, vaccination providers may be able to charge administration fees for giving the shot. The CARES Act requires that these costs be covered by the patient’s public or private insurance company.

For uninsured patients, the vaccine administration fee is covered by the HHS Provider Relief Fund. For more information about the HHS Provider Relief Fund, please go [here](#).



Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the WTC Health Program

The World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program's top priority is to meet your WTC-related health care needs and ensure you take steps to protect your health during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are supporting the Clinical Centers of Excellence (CCEs) and the Nationwide Provider Network (NPN) as they continue providing WTC-related care while limiting face-to-face interactions and using telehealth.

What we've done in response to COVID-19

We have taken several steps to ensure that Program members continue to receive monitoring, treatment, and other authorized services for their certified WTC-related conditions during this challenging time. For any questions about your WTC-related care and COVID-19, please contact your clinic.



Expanded use of telehealth

We have approved the use of telehealth services (either telephone or video) so that members can continue to receive care without coming into a clinic. Telehealth services may vary from clinic to clinic but will help ensure continued care for certified WTC-related conditions.



Implemented in-person safeguards

Each clinic is following the preparedness plan outlined by their parent institution. Non-essential appointments are being rescheduled or moved to telehealth, and several safety measures are in place for any essential in-person visits.



Home Delivery

All members with prescriptions for their certified WTC-related conditions are strongly encouraged to sign up for Optum Home Delivery which allows for 90-day prescription fills and delivers directly to members by mail. For more information, please call Optum at (855) 640-0005, Option 2.



Continuity of Program Operations

The WTC Health Program is working to ensure that members receive services in a timely manner during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are no processing delays for WTC Health Program enrollments or certifications at this time. Members should keep upcoming monitoring and treatment appointments, unless otherwise advised by your clinic. Clinics are continuing to provide care through telehealth services (phone or video) when possible.

Get the latest COVID-19 updates
from the WTC Health Program at
www.cdc.gov/wtc/covid19.html

For updates from the September 11th
Victim Compensation Fund (VCF), visit
www.vcf.gov/covid-19

COVID-19 testing and treatment

The WTC Health Program will cover testing for members with symptoms suggesting COVID-19 who also have a certified WTC-related health condition of a respiratory nature (e.g., asthma, COPD, interstitial lung disease) or who have impaired immune function secondary to a certified WTC-related health condition.

The Program will cover outpatient and inpatient treatment for COVID-19 on a case-by-case basis based on the member's certified WTC-related health condition and in consultation with the CCEs or NPN.

01/21

Learn More. Visit www.cdc.gov/wtc/covid19.html or call 1-888-982-4748
World Trade Center | Pentagon | Shanksville, PA

When to seek care for COVID-19 symptoms

If you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop COVID-19 symptoms such as a fever or cough, call your health care provider. If contacting the CCEs or the NPN, you may be referred to alternative locations for COVID-19 testing and treatment based on local public health directives.

If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19, get medical attention immediately. Emergency warning signs include, but are not limited to*:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

Learn more about COVID-19 symptoms at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html

**This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your health care provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.*

Protect yourself and those around you

All WTC Health Program members are encouraged to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s guidelines to protect against COVID-19.

This includes:

- Washing your hands frequently
- Staying home as much as possible, especially if you do get sick
- Practicing social distancing and using a cloth face cover when you go out in public
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick

See all prevention tips at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus

Additionally, some members with certain health conditions, WTC-related or not, may be at a higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. The CDC recommends additional preventive steps be taken for these higher risk individuals. This information is available at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html

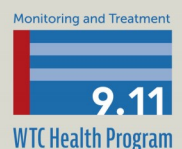
Please note: The WTC Health Program is not able to provide disinfectant supplies or personal protective equipment. If you are in need of these supplies, please contact a local COVID-19 resource helpline.



We know that this time of social distancing and self-isolation may be filled with stress and anxiety. Information on mental health resources is available at www.cdc.gov/wtc/mentalhealth.html

If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others, **call or text Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990.** It's free, confidential, and available 24/7.

Learn More. Visit www.cdc.gov/wtc/covid19.html or call 1-888-982-4748
World Trade Center | Pentagon | Shanksville, PA





VCF CLAIM DEADLINE VS REGISTRATION DEADLINE

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (“VCF”) was created to provide compensation for any individual (or a personal representative of a deceased individual) who suffered physical harm or was killed as a result of a terrorist-related aircraft crashes of September 11, 2001 or the debris removal efforts that took place in the immediate aftermath of those crashes.

For more information on how to register or file a claim, please visit the website below:

<http://www.vcf.gov/>

THE VCF REGISTRATION DEADLINE

- * Registration preserves the right to file a claim in the future, waives no legal rights, and **DOES NOT** obligate you to file a claim. There is no deadline to register for the VCF, but you must be registered with the VCF before filing a claim.
- * If you were certified by the WTC Health Program for a 9/11-related physical health condition **BEFORE July 29, 2019**, you are required to register with the VCF by **July 29, 2021**.
- * If you have **NOT** been certified by the WTC Health Program for a 9/11-related physical condition, you may **STILL** register for the VCF. If in the future, a condition becomes certified, you will be able to file a claim immediately.
- * If you were certified **AFTER July 29, 2019**, you are required to register within **2 years** of your latest date of eligible certified condition. (i.e. certified for a physical health condition on August 1, 2020 you must register by August 1, 2022).

VS

THE VCF CLAIM DEADLINE

- * As per the VCF Permanent Authorization Act, the last day to file a claim is **October 1, 2090**. You will have to register for the VCF prior to October 1, 2090 date to file a claim by the deadline.
- * You should only file a claim if currently are or after you a certified for an eligible World Trade Center Health Program 9/11-related physical health condition.

Please visit: <https://www.vcf.gov/deadlines> for more detailed information

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about any of this information, please call the VCF Helpline directly at:

1-855-885-1555

VIRTUAL GROUPS STARTING SPRING 2021!



The WTC Health Program at Rutgers Mental Health team will continue to offer a variety of virtual groups where you can connect, support one another, and learn new skills to promote well-being across a variety of life domains including - relationships, life transitions, physical health concerns, stress and mindfulness.

9/11-RELATED CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

This group provides a safe, therapeutic setting, where first responders can process their experiences with cancer amongst peers who have undergone similar health issues. It is a peer support group led by trained facilitators with a focus on sharing coping strategies, relating personal experiences and processing life changes due to a cancer diagnosis. Group sessions are offered through a secure video platform, once a week for 75 minutes.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Anyone who has been diagnosed with a 9/11-related cancer and is interested in receiving support around this diagnosis (even if you are in remission).

PEER SUPPORT GROUP

This group aims to provide support around life changes related to transitions such as retirement and other personal changes. It is a peer support group led by trained facilitators with a focus on sharing coping strategies, relating personal experiences of grief and loss, and building a sense of community. Group sessions will be held through a secure video platform once a week for 60 minutes.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Anyone who is interested in receiving support around life changes, adjustment, and transitions.

PROJECT UPLIFT

This is a program that teaches mental health skills along with mindfulness and meditation skills to help members cope with increased stress, anxiety, depression, or chronic health problems. You will learn information, practice activities, and engage in peer support. Group sessions will be held by phone, once a week for 60 minutes. This program runs for 8 consecutive weeks.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Anyone who is experiencing increased stress, anxiety, depression, or chronic health problems and is interested in learning new coping skills.

If you are interested in joining any of the following groups, please contact Rupali (“Roo”) Kulshreshtha at 929-257-1033 for more information.

HEALTH & WELLNESS GROUP

This group focuses on enhancing overall well-being. Topics include managing stress, maintaining good physical health, improving communication skills, sleep hygiene, nutrition, social supports, and better understanding the mind/body connection. This group meets weekly for 90 minutes.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

ANYONE!

COUPLES WORKSHOP

The Couples Workshop will be led by two trained facilitators. It aims to provide skills and support for you and your partner and will focus on topics such as improving communication, managing stress and increasing fun and play! The workshop consists of 4 sessions, which will be offered through a secure video platform once a week for 2 hours. Both individuals must be willing to participate.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Anyone interested in forming and maintaining a better relationship with their partner!

WOMEN’S SUPPORT GROUP

This group is aimed at helping members increase resilience, confidence, empowerment and improving self-understanding through the power of interpersonal relationships. The goal is to create a vision to guide you and strengthen your sense of self, and, to develop effective coping strategies through open discussions and group feedback.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Any Female responder

MEDITATION

Meditation is considered a type of mind-body complementary medicine. Meditation can produce a deep state of relaxation and a tranquil mind. During meditation, you focus your attention and eliminate the stream of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding your mind and causing stress. This process may result in enhanced physical and emotional well-being. Meditation can help carry you more calmly through your day and may help you manage symptoms of certain medical conditions. This group is ongoing, so it is not mandatory to attend every session.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

ANYONE!

BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

Prep: 25 mins

Cook: 45 min

Total Time: 1 hr. 10 min

Yields: 4 Servings

Ingredients

2 Tbs. butter
1 small yellow onion
1 stalk celery, chopped
1 medium carrot
Fresh parsley, chopped

2 medium potatoes, cubed
1 medium butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cubed
1 (32 fluid oz) container vegetable stock
Salt and pepper to taste

Steps

1. Melt butter in a large pot, and cook the onion, celery, carrot, potatoes and squash 5 min, or until lightly browned.
2. Pour enough of the chicken stock to cover the vegetables. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover pot and simmer 40 min, or until all vegetables are tender.
3. Transfer the soup to a blender. Blend until the soup is orange and creamy. Return to pot, and mix remaining stock to desired consistency. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Pour soup into bowls, garnish with chopped parsley.
5. Enjoy!



(www.allrecepies.com, 2021)

“Food is the most primitive form of comfort.” - Sheila Graham Westbrook

GOULASH

Prep: 15 mins

Cook: 45 min

Total Time: 1 hr.

Yields: 6 Servings

Ingredients

2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium yellow onion
2 cloves garlic, minced
1lb ground beef
Salt to taste
Freshly ground pepper
1 tbsp. tomato paste
Freshly chopped parsley, for garnish

1 1/4 cup low-sodium beef broth
1 (15-oz.) can tomato sauce
1 (15 oz.) can diced tomatoes
1 tsp. Italian seasoning
1 tsp. paprika
1 1/2 cup elbow macaroni, uncooked
1 cup shredded cheddar

Steps

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add onion and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute more.
2. Add ground beef and cook until no longer pink, about 6 minutes. Drain fat and return to pan. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Add tomato paste and stir to coat, then pour in broth, tomato sauce and diced tomatoes. Season with Italian seasoning and paprika, and stir in macaroni. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until pasta is tender, about 15 minutes.
4. Stir in cheese and remove from heat.
5. Garnish with parsley before serving.



(www.delish.com, 2021)

CURRENT CLINIC OPERATING STATUS

Our clinic is slowly reopening, but many of our staff members are still working remotely and answering your calls and questions as quickly as possible. Please be patient for a returned call.

At this time, our front desk lines are open for emergencies and scheduling/rescheduling appointments **ONLY**.

For all other calls, **please dial 848-445-0123 option 1 and select the most appropriate prompt**. Please leave one message with your request on the staff member's voicemail. Someone will return your call within 24 to 48 hours.

As much as we'd love to see everyone again, please do not come to the clinic **UNLESS** you have a **CONFIRMED** scheduled **IN-PERSON** appointment.

If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please feel free to call us at **848-445-0123** to be assessed over the phone or contact your primary care physician.

If you experience a medical emergency, please dial 9-1-1 or visit your nearest emergency room.

To schedule an in-person or telehealth appointment, please contact us at:

848-445-0123, option 1 then 4.

****We are currently scheduling a limited number of in-person appointments. Most appointments will be conducted via a telehealth appointment over the phone.****

When our clinic fully reopens, we will be sure to contact you by email.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN THE FUTURE!

***Please be sure to update your contact information!
To make any changes, please speak to a staff member.
Thank you!***

WORLD TRADE CENTER HEALTH PROGRAM
CLINICAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE AT
RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEWJERSEY
ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SCIENCES INSTITUTE

170 Frelinghuysen Rd
Piscataway, New Jersey 08854
Phone: (848) 445-0123, option 1
Fax: (732) 445-0127
E-mail: wtchp-help@eohsi.rutgers.edu.