

DHHS Opens 4 New Monoclonal Antibodies Sites

By Administrator

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The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services announced four new locations offering monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) for treatment of COVID-19 managed by local organizations in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, bringing the number of sites in the state offering this therapy to more than 200. FEMA will also help staff one existing site. This partnership will give more North Carolinians access to monoclonal antibody treatment, which can decrease the likelihood of hospitalization related to COVID-19 if taken early.

“While vaccines provide the best protection from COVID-19, treatment options such as monoclonal antibodies are available for people at high risk for severe illness if you have had symptoms of COVID-19 for 10 days or less or have been exposed to COVID-19,” said Dr. Elizabeth Tilson, NCDHHS State Health Director and Chief Medical Officer. “Expanding access to this potentially lifesaving treatment can, if taken early, reduce the risk of severe disease, hospitalization and death.”

The four new sites, which are all operational as of the afternoon on Sept. 17, are located in Harnett, Johnston, Robeson and Wilkes counties. Listed below are the new sites and information about how people can make appointments, which are required:

- Wilkes County: The Health Foundation in North Wilkesboro. Call 336-528-1637 or fill out this form.

- Johnston County: Smithfield Hospital Campus in Smithfield. Call 919-268-1621.

- Harnett County: Central Carolina Community College Harnett Health Sciences Center in Lillington. Call 910-893-0653.

- Robeson County: UNC-Southeastern Ambulatory Care Center in Lumberton. Referrals based on a positive COVID-19 test are required for this location.

In addition, FEMA-contracted health care staff are providing surge capacity for an existing monoclonal antibody clinic at Erlanger Western Carolina Hospital in Murphy in Cherokee County.

NCDHHS, local partners and FEMA chose these locations based on a combination of geographic gaps in access to treatment and regional COVID-19 case counts. Appointments are required, but patients who qualify for treatment do not need a referral from a health care provider for sites other than Robeson County if they meet medical screening criteria when setting up their appointment. ID is not required to receive treatment at the FEMA-supported sites.

The federal government is providing monoclonal antibody therapy at no cost to patients. However, health care providers may charge an administration fee for treatment. Medicare and many commercial insurance companies are covering all costs for patients. Check with your

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health plan to learn more about treatment costs.

People who believe they may be eligible for treatment should ask their health care provider about monoclonal antibodies or call the Combat COVID Monoclonal Antibodies Call Center at 1-877-332-6585 (English) or 1-877-366-0310 (Spanish). The call center can assist people who do not have a health care provider. More information, including answers to frequently asked questions about monoclonal antibody treatments, is available at covid19.ncdhhs.gov/treatment.

Monoclonal antibodies are proteins made in a laboratory to fight infections — in this case, the virus that causes COVID-19 — and are given to patients directly with an IV infusion or a shot. Some early evidence suggests this treatment can reduce the amount of the virus, or viral load, that causes COVID-19 in a person's body. Having a lower viral load may reduce the severity of symptoms and decrease the likelihood of hospitalization.

To meet the goal of administering monoclonal antibodies to treat mild to moderate COVID-19, or for preventive treatment in patients who are high risk for severe disease, Dr. Tilson issued a statewide Standing Order to expand access to this treatment following Governor Roy Cooper's Executive Order 232. There has been increasing demand for monoclonal antibody treatment in North Carolina and across the country, creating strain on supply. This week, North Carolina was allocated 6,500 doses by the federal government to meet the requests submitted to the state.

On Sept. 13, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) transitioned from the direct ordering process for monoclonal antibodies to a state-coordinated distribution system. At this time, federal mAb direct ordering has been paused and NCDHHS has updated providers on a new request process. A state-coordinated distribution system will give health departments maximum flexibility to get these critical drugs where they are needed most.

Vaccination remains the best protection against serious illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19. All unvaccinated North Carolinians age 12 and older should get a COVID-19 vaccine now to protect themselves, their community and those who cannot be vaccinated. Rigorous clinical trials among thousands of people ages 12 and older have proven vaccines are safe and effective. Almost 200 million Americans have been safely vaccinated.

Free COVID-19 vaccines are widely available across the state to anyone 12 and older. To get

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a vaccine near you, visit [MySpot.nc.gov](https://www.myspot.nc.gov) or call 888-675-4567. You can also text your zip code to 438829 to find vaccine locations near you.