



# Live Well, Work Well

Employee Health Benefits Bulletin

February 2021

Branchburg Township School District

## The COVID-19 Vaccine

*Timely Tip:* At the start of each new year, you can access certain in-network preventive care services (e.g., lab work, routine physicals, and screenings) at no charge.

*Reminder:* any deductibles that apply to your plans renewed on January 1.

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*The pandemic continues—stay current with this vaccine update:*

Two COVID-19 vaccines have been granted emergency use authorization by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) at the time of this writing. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines differ in some ways (namely, how they are shipped), but they are generally the same. Both are now being distributed throughout the United States.

Here in New Jersey, those in the education sector are considered *frontline essential workers* and are designated as “Phase 1B” vaccine recipients. One way to get your vaccine is to pre-register at [covidvaccine.nj.gov](https://covidvaccine.nj.gov); you should be notified once your vaccine is available. As with most recommended vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccine is typically covered by your [Horizon BCBSNJ](#) medical plan.

Both vaccines work by “tricking” the immune system into creating antibodies that fight COVID-19, the same method used in most modern vaccines, including the flu vaccine given to millions each year.



There is a chance of mild side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine; these include swelling, pain, or redness near

the vaccine site; fatigue; chills; headache; joint pain; and fever. This is normal and means the vaccine is working—contact your doctor if symptoms persist.

The vaccine is administered in two doses to ensure the most protection. Even after receiving both doses, you must continue following COVID-19 [safety guidelines](#). Visit [cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov) for ongoing vaccine updates.

### Chapter 44 Contribution Clarification

For employees earning a base salary above \$125,000, the NJEHP contribution amount is calculated using a salary of \$125,000.

## New COVID-19 Strain

The CDC reports a new variant of COVID-19 has [been reported](#) in the United States. Referred to as B.1.1.7, this strain of the coronavirus was identified in the United Kingdom before it was detected in the United States.

Thus far, knowledge of this new COVID-19 strain is minimal, though health experts believe it to be up to 50% more contagious than the more common strain. However, according to the CDC, there is not yet evidence that this variant causes more severe illness or increased risk of death than the standard strain.

Health experts believe the COVID-19 vaccine should have similar efficacy on B.1.1.7 as the common COVID-19 strain, though there is limited knowledge on the topic as yet.

In response to B.1.1.7 and other COVID-19 strains, the CDC has launched “National SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance (NS3),” a program to increase the number and types of viruses undergoing characterization. Data from these efforts will continue to be analyzed at the CDC, which will communicate new information as it becomes available.

As additional states report cases of the new variant, it is important to continue protecting yourself and loved ones. For more information on the new strain, visit [cdc.gov](#).



## Healthy Recipe

### Baked Lemon Chicken

#### Ingredients

- 3-1/2 pounds chicken
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 1-1/2 garlic cloves thinly sliced (or 1 tsp. garlic powder)
- 4 thyme sprigs (or 1 tsp. dried thyme)
- 3 cups onion (thinly sliced)
- 1-1/2 cups chicken stock
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 lemon (cut into 10 slices)

#### Preparations

- 1) Skin chicken and cut into 10 pieces; lay chicken pieces in a 11x13-inch baking pan.
- 2) Sprinkle salt, pepper, garlic, and thyme over the chicken.
- 3) Combine onions, chicken stock, and lemon juice in a sauce pan. Heat mixture to a boil.
- 4) Pour hot lemon mixture around the chicken.
- 5) Top chicken with lemon slices.
- 6) Bake 30 minutes at 400°F; serve.

## National Health Observances

### February

#### American Heart Month

American Heart Association  
[heart.org](#)

#### National Children's Dental Health Month

American Dental Association  
[ada.org](#)

### March

#### National Nutrition Month

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
[eatright.org](#)

#### National Kidney Month

National Kidney Foundation  
[kidney.org](#)

#### Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Colorectal Cancer Alliance  
[ccalliance.org](#)