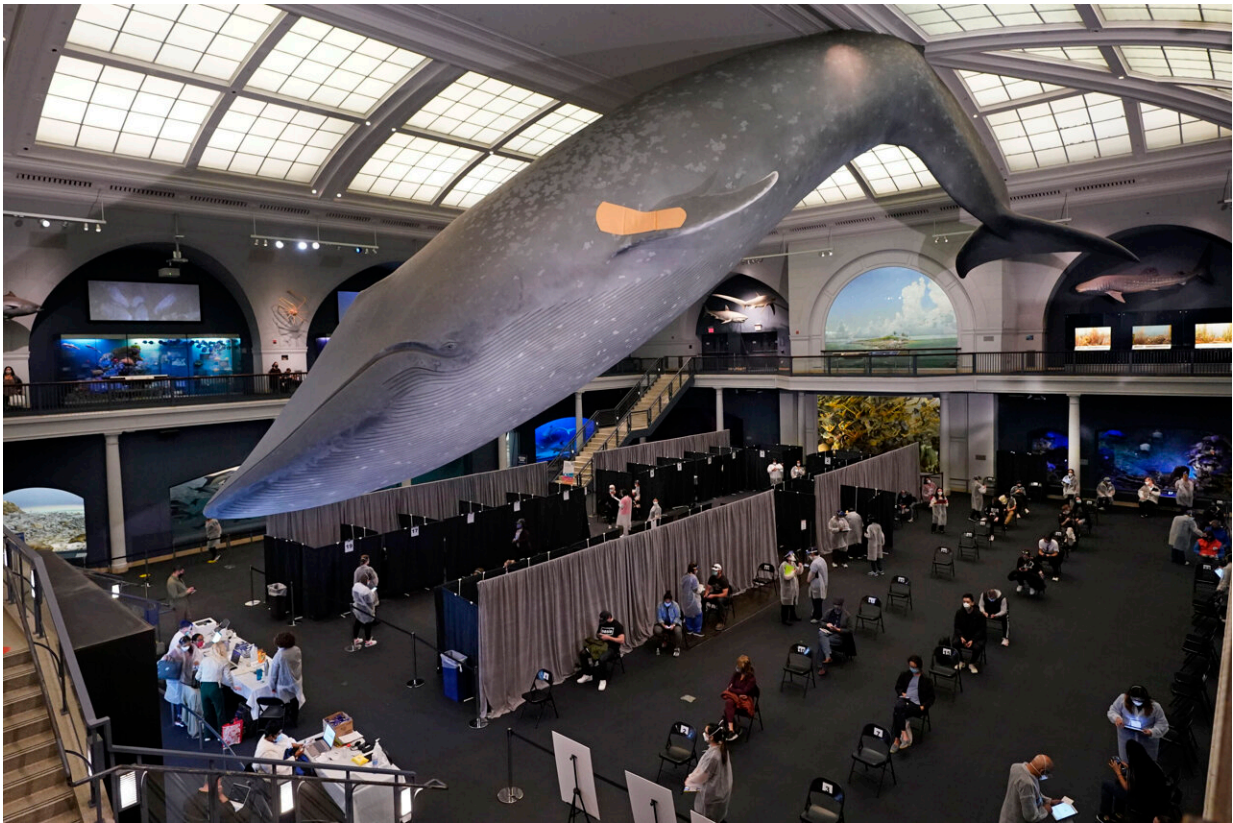


Whale of a time: NYC offers walk-up vaccinations for all

April 23 2021



People rest in the observation area, at right, after receiving COVID-19 vaccinations under the 94-foot-long, 21,000-pound model of a blue whale, in the Milstein Family Hall of Ocean Life, at the American Museum of Natural History, in New York, Friday, April 23, 2021. Appointments are no longer necessary at any of the coronavirus vaccination sites run by New York City. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Friday that anyone eligible for the vaccine could walk up to any of the city's mass vaccination sites and get a shot. The change comes as supplies of the vaccine have increased. (AP Photo/Richard

Drew)

Appointments are no longer mandatory at any of the coronavirus vaccination sites run by New York City, including its newest and maybe coolest location: beneath the giant blue whale at the Museum of Natural History.

Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Friday that the city will now be accepting walk-ins at off its vaccination sites.

"You can just walk up and get vaccinated," he said.

That includes at the museum's Milstein Hall of Ocean Life, dominated by a 94-foot-long (28.5-meter-long) model of a blue whale that appears to float through the air. Vaccinations in the hall began Friday.

The whale now sports a bandage on one of its fins, like the ones health care workers are sticking on people's arms after they get a shot.

The expansion of walk-in service comes as supplies of the vaccine have increased. Just weeks ago, most people trying to get an appointment for a vaccination in the nation's biggest city had to game online appointment systems in which scarce slots would be snapped up in moments.

But in recent days, tens of thousands of appointments have been available at any given moment, though arranging them still requires planning and a degree of computer savvy.

A week ago the city began offering walk-up vaccinations to everyone age 50 and over. De Blasio, a Democrat, said it went well enough that the city is now doing the same for people of all ages.



COVID-19 vaccination cubicles are set up under the 94-foot-long, 21,000-pound model of a blue whale, in the Milstein Family Hall of Ocean Life, at the American Museum of Natural History, in New York, Friday, April 23, 2021. Appointments are no longer necessary at any of the coronavirus vaccination sites run by New York City. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Friday that anyone eligible for the vaccine could walk up to any of the city's mass vaccination sites and get a shot. The change comes as supplies of the vaccine have increased. (AP Photo/Richard Drew)

"We saw really good results. Lot of people said it was the reason they came and got vaccinated. It was a lot simpler for them. And we did not have the kinds of lines we were worried about," the mayor said.

New York state began offering walk-in shots at vaccination sites that it runs on Wednesday, but only for people age 60 or over.

Through Friday, about 40% of all New York City residents had gotten at least one vaccine dose. About 26% have been fully vaccinated.

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