



## Health Alert Network Message 21-47: Extension of Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 Vaccine Shelf Life

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Revision Dates (List All Revision Dates):

### Extension of Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Shelf-life

The U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized an extension of the shelf life for the Johnson & Johnson single-shot COVID-19 vaccine from 3 months to 4.5 months. The decision is based on data from ongoing stability assessment studies, which have demonstrated that the vaccine is stable at 4.5 months when refrigerated at temperatures of 36 – 46 degrees Fahrenheit (2 – 8 degrees Celsius).

This expiration date change applies to all J&J vaccines currently in Louisiana that have not yet expired. The state has automatically updated the J&J expiration dates in LINKS to reflect this new extended expiration date. **No additional provider action required related to the updating of expiration dates within LINKS.** Providers should still adjust their own internal system records or any other physical documentation of expiration dates, as needed.

Expiration dates will be updated on [www.vaxcheck.nj](http://www.vaxcheck.nj) for providers to view. Vaccine providers can always visit [www.vaxcheck.nj](http://www.vaxcheck.nj) to confirm the latest expiration dates of our vaccine, including those currently available for administration throughout the U.S.

### Consideration for Using of Pfizer Vaccine

The Louisiana Department of Health is filling a majority of new COVID-19 vaccine orders with the vaccine stock that is currently stored at the in-state vaccine depot operated by Morris & Dickson. Filling orders in this manner helps to ensure the doses already within the state get administered and are not wasted. Large quantities of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine are in-stock, while far fewer Moderna vaccines remain.

To help the state in its efforts to reduce the amount of unordered Pfizer doses at the depot, the state asks providers to **consider ordering Pfizer vaccines for future first (prime) dose purposes.** Of course there is no requirement to order and utilize Pfizer over any other available product, the state only asks that you consider the use of the Pfizer vaccine for your patients, if you have not already done so.

At one time, Pfizer vaccine had a very short shelf life, once it was taken out of ultra-cold storage. Updated guidance from the FDA and CDC now allow for extended storage capabilities. Once taken from ultra-cold storage, vials may be shipped and stored at -25°C to -15°C (-13°F to 5°F) for up to 2 weeks. Then, once taken out of frozen temperatures, vials can be stored at refrigerated temperatures between 2°C to 8°C (35°F to 46°F), for up to one month. This is a total of 45 days that Pfizer can be stored in a normal fridge/freezer unit!

Another advantage when dealing with Pfizer vaccine is that it comes in six dose vials. The new Moderna vials contain 14 doses. Having a smaller dose vial could be beneficial to some providers at this point of the vaccination response, as there may be instances of fewer individuals seeking vaccination within a particular timeframe. When using the Pfizer product in these instances, it equates to possibly less wastage with fewer or no doses being left unused/wasted in a pierced/mixed vial. All vaccine products, including Pfizer, can be ordered in quantities as little as one vial. This means providers could order a very small amount of vaccine, and have 45 days to use it.

That said, some wastage at this point in the vaccination campaign is to be expected and will not reflect poorly on vaccine providers. As the CDC has advised, please do not pass up an opportunity to vaccinate someone even if it may unfortunately result in some waste.

We appreciate your consideration in potentially utilizing Pfizer vaccine at your site moving forward, if you haven't done so already. If more providers consider ordering Pfizer doses going forward, we may be able to decrease the number of doses that remain unused at the vaccine depot and eventually expire. If you place an order for Moderna, someone from LDH may reach out to you about the possibility of switching the order to Pfizer as well. We thank providers for their continued vaccination efforts in Louisiana. Please call 504-568-2600 or email [la.immunization@la.gov](mailto:la.immunization@la.gov) if you have any questions with the information provided in this memo.

LDH Immunization Program