

## Routine Vaccination of High-Risk Adults during the Coronavirus Pandemic

As you know, all adults need certain vaccines to help protect themselves and those around them from common and serious diseases. However, factors such as age and specific health conditions put some of your adult patients at higher risk for diseases and complications than younger, healthier adults. Patients with chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease are at increased risk of developing serious complications from vaccine-preventable diseases, including long-term illness, hospitalization, and even death. Therefore, the Louisiana Immunization Program strongly recommends that providers continue vaccinating high-risk adult patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. This prioritized group should also include women in their third trimester of pregnancy, adults who may need vaccinations due to occupational hazards, and adults engaging in behaviors that would put them at increased risk for contracting an infectious disease.

Health care providers can help ensure the safety of their high-risk adult patients when providing vaccinations during the COVID-19 pandemic by considering the implementation of the following precautions:

- Schedule patient visits so that sick patients arrive after the patients only needing vaccinations.
- If not able to separate the timing of patient visits, then take steps to separating patients spatially. Place patients with sick visits in different areas of the clinic or another location from patients with well visits.
- Establish different entrances in your clinic where sick and well patients may enter. Clearly mark entrances for patients considered to be at higher risk for COVID-19.
- Collaborate with providers in the community to identify separate locations for holding appointments for high-risk adults needing to be vaccinated.
- Generally lower the number of patients on site at any one time. Possibly close a waiting room or registration area and have patients check in by phone from the parking lot.
- Tell patients who are ill to use telemedicine or a phone call, thus not coming into contact with those seeking vaccinations at the clinic.
- Tell patients to drive to the clinic and wait in their car, initially, while staff goes outside to check on them.
- Give vaccinations to patients seated in their car. Maintain proper hygiene and waste disposal practices outdoors just as you would indoors. Remember to follow all Storage and Handling safe practices.
- Screen all patients for high-risk symptoms.
- Refer high-risk adults to pharmacies who can give vaccines at less busy times to keep them safer.

As your adult patients' most valued and trusted source of health information, you have the power to protect them from vaccine-preventable diseases. You should take every opportunity to discuss and help your high-risk adult patients get their routine vaccinations during the pandemic to maximize their protection from common, preventable infectious diseases.

Resources:

Adult Vaccination Information for Healthcare and Public Health Professionals (CDC)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults/index.html>