



Question of the Week

The COVID-19 public health declaration is ending, does this mean COVID-19 is over?



The Biden administration announced its **plans to end the COVID-19 national emergency declarations** on May 11, 2023. Before the declarations expire, the administration and other national, state and local leaders will share detailed information about what the policy change will mean for organizations, healthcare providers, individuals and families.

Ending the COVID-19 emergency declarations does not mean the virus has been eradicated. Also, states of emergencies are intended to be temporary, and when emergency powers expire, not all policies related to COVID-19 end. Continue to consult Centers for Disease Control's (CDC's) website for guidance as well as guidance from your state and local health departments.

CDC continues to advise that everyone:

- Get vaccinated and get the latest booster.
- Use at-home tests if you've been exposed or have symptoms.
- Stay home if you're sick.
- Wear a high-quality mask when COVID-19 levels are high.

These precautions are the best ways to continue to protect ourselves, families and patients, and manage the pandemic as it continues to evolve.

Symposium explores long COVID

The Louisiana Community Engagement Alliance Against COVID-19 Disparities (LA-CEAL) and the Tulane University School of Medicine are hosting a



symposium Friday, April 21, 2023, entitled “The Post-COVID Conditions (Long COVID): Current Status and Future Directions.”

This symposium is designed to address the need to educate healthcare professionals on the current understanding of the cause, prevalence, evaluation and management of post-COVID conditions (long COVID). Participants will be provided with the most up-to-date findings and guidance statements forming best practices in caring for people with long COVID.

Experts, clinicians, researchers and guest speakers will lecture on current guideline statements and research. Presentations will include both didactic and interactive case discussions.

Register and view event details [here](#).

Updated COVID-19 booster eligibility for children 6 months–4 years

Following U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) action, CDC has expanded its recommendation to allow children ages 6 months through 4 years who previously completed the full 3-dose monovalent Pfizer COVID-19 primary vaccination series to now receive a booster dose of Pfizer’s updated (bivalent) COVID-19 vaccine.

This change only applies to the approximately 350,000 children who were early adopters of Pfizer’s 3-dose COVID-19 vaccine primary series. However, the update means that all children in this age group are now eligible to receive an updated vaccine, either through the completion of their primary series or through a booster dose.

Summary: Children in this age group who previously received 3 monovalent Pfizer-BioNTech primary series doses are authorized to receive 1 bivalent Pfizer-BioNTech booster dose at least 2 months after completion of the monovalent primary series.

For more information, see these links:

- [COVID-19 Vaccination Schedule Infographic](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccination Schedule Infographic \(Immunocompromised\)](#)

With spring break ahead, we want to provide parents and caregivers with every tool available to safely enjoy planned activities.



Adolescent Immunization Action Week

April 3–7 is Adolescent Immunization Action Week. Throughout the week, LDH joins the UNITY Consortium to urge parents, healthcare providers and others to help keep adolescents up to date on their immunizations.

Vaccination helps prevent adolescents and young adults from getting sick and missing out on activities that are important to them.

Immunizations are safe, effective and timed to protect adolescents before they are likely exposed to serious, potentially life-threatening diseases, including meningitis, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, HPV-related cancers, COVID-19 and flu.

Click [here](#) to view resources for Adolescent Immunization Action Week.



Louisiana Shots for Tots Coalition March meeting

The LA Shots for Tots Coalition meeting is scheduled for tomorrow Friday, March 24, 2023, beginning at 10:30 A.M. at the Lafayette Parish Health Unit. Lunch will be provided.

Please note that masks are required when entering the lobby and walking through the health unit to the conference room. Masks may be removed once attendees reach the conference room. Masks will be provided by the coalition.

Please RSVP to info@shotsfortots.com as soon as possible.

View flier [here](#).



Dr. Tina Stefanski talks HPV and cervical cancer on Vax Matters podcast



What's the relationship between human papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical cancer? Is there one? LDH Regional Medical Director Dr. Tina Stefanski fills us in on this special Vax Update segment of Vax Matters.

Jump to the episode [here](#). Vax Matters can now be found on the Louisiana Department of Health's (LDH's) YouTube channel. Click [here to subscribe](#) and be notified when new episodes have been uploaded.

Be sure to like, comment and share your favorite episodes of the Vax Matters podcast and be a part of the 1000+ listens nationwide.

Vax Matters is now expanding to include topics other than vaccines. If you are interested in being a guest on Vax Matters, send a note to Jourdan Barnes at jourdan.barnes@la.gov. Include your contact information and the subject you would like to discuss.



Week 10 FluView report

Seasonal influenza is steadily declining in Louisiana but remains a threat; keep encouraging vaccination. Click below for key points summarizing FluView data and other relevant flu-related information.

In Louisiana during Week 10:

- **1.5%** of patient visits reported through the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) were due to influenza-like illness (ILI).

- This percentage is **below the regional baseline** of 3.9%.
- The ILI case definition changed starting with the 2021–2022 season: fever >100.3 AND cough and/or sore throat.

Cumulative 2022–23 influenza vaccinations statewide:

1. Flu vaccines given to individuals 0–17 years of age: 146,670
2. Flu vaccines given to individuals 18+ years of age: 651,352

[FluView Report Week 10](#)



Medicaid to start using text messages

Beginning Monday, March 20, 2023, Louisiana Medicaid will start using a text messaging service to send members important reminders about their health insurance coverage. These text messages may include reminders about renewals and reminders to update contact information. Members will still receive notices by mail.

Medicaid texts will always come from this number: 72147. Members have the option to opt out of text messages but are encouraged to remain subscribed so that they don't miss out on important information about their health insurance.

Members can update their contact information in one of several ways which are all listed on <https://ldh.la.gov/page/4454>.

FDA approves intramuscular injection as an option, in addition to subcutaneous administration, for M-M-R II, Varivax, and ProQuad vaccines



intramuscular (IM) injection as an option for M-M-R II (measles-mumps-rubella vaccine), Varivax (varicella vaccine), and ProQuad (measles-mumps-rubella-varicella vaccine) from Merck. Previously, these vaccines were only licensed for subcutaneous (subcut) injection.

Two brands of MMR vaccine are distributed in the United States. Only Merck's brand is licensed for either IM or subcut administration. Priorix from GSK is licensed for

subcut administration.

[View Merck's press release.](#)

Vaccine resource hub

The Vaccine Equity Resource Hub is essential for individuals and organizations interested in promoting equitable distribution and access to vaccination materials and tools including COVID-19.

This resource hub provides a wealth of information, including social media assets, factsheets and talking points. The materials are designed to help guide providers in educating patients and community members about diseases and available vaccinations.

Individuals can play a vital role in advocating for the fair distribution of vaccines and ensuring everyone has access to life-saving vaccines, regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.

Visit the [Vaccine Equity Resource Hub](#) to view its resources.



Adult Mental Health First Aid training

The Louisiana Department of Health is offering Adult Mental Health First Aid training from April through June 2023. There is no cost to participate, but registration is required.

Just as CPR helps even those without clinical training to assist an individual having a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) prepares participants to interact with a person experiencing a mental health crisis.

MHFA is an evidence-based public education program that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health challenges, and builds understanding of appropriate detection techniques, interventions, and resource and referrals.

View flyer [here](#) for additional information. Please share this information with others.



Was IZ Newsletter Issue 103 informative?

Yes

No

Office of Public Health | Immunization Team | 1450 Poydras Street, Suite 1938, New Orleans,
LA 70112

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