

# IMMUNIZATION COVID-19 UPDATE

ISSUE NO 16 | MAY 26, 2021



## QUESTION OF THE WEEK:

**What are the latest changes to the state restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19?**

Following months of improvement in COVID-19 hospitalizations and with nearly three million vaccine doses administered, Gov. John Bel Edwards on Tuesday, May 25, 2021, signed an updated public health emergency order that removes all remaining business capacity restrictions and the vast majority of masking requirements that were in effect after the statewide mask mandate was lifted on April 28, 2021.

- Masks will be required in educational settings until the end of the current academic semester, at which time state and local oversight boards will set their own masking policies.
- LDH will continue to revise guidance and masking recommendations for summer camps, following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. The CDC recently announced that it was safe for vaccinated people to not wear masks in most settings.
- Ongoing masks mandates: Under order of the State Health Officer, masks continue to be required in healthcare settings, which is a federal mandate. In addition, masks are required on public transportation and in jails and prisons, as per federal guidance.
- Local governments and businesses may choose to have stronger restrictions than the state does and the Governor encourages Louisianans to respect all local or business mandates, especially when it comes to masking.

The Governor, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), the CDC, and numerous public health officials recommend that unvaccinated individuals continue to wear a face mask in public and when they are with people outside of their households to reduce their likelihood of contracting COVID-19.

VACCINE DOSES  
ADMINISTERED IN  
LOUISIANA

2,938,910

PFIZER UPDATES  
STORAGE OF  
THAWED  
VACCINE VIALS

FDA authorizes up to 30 days for refrigerator storage of thawed Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. (Page 2)

MODERNA  
LARGER VOLUME  
VIALS AVAILABLE  
FOR ORDERING

Moderna COVID-19 vaccine vials will be available for ordering in LINKS in a new maximum 15 dose vial, starting Thursday, May 27, 2021. (Page 2-3)

# WEEKLY COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

Here is an overview of major updates that occurred over the week.

## FDA Authorizes Refrigerator Storage of Thawed, Undiluted Pfizer Vaccine for Up to One Month

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized up to 30 days for refrigerator storage of thawed Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine prior to dilution, making the vaccine more widely available. The vials should be stored in the refrigerator at 2°C to 8°C (35°F to 46°F).

If frozen, the vials can be stored for up to two weeks in the freezer and then moved to an ultra-low temperature (ULT) freezer until the expiration date or to the refrigerator for 30 days.

Making COVID-19 vaccines widely available is key to getting people vaccinated and bringing the pandemic to an end. Pfizer Inc. submitted data to the FDA to support the storage of undiluted, thawed vials of its COVID-19 vaccine for up to one month at refrigerator temperatures. This change should make this vaccine more widely available to the American public by facilitating the ability of vaccine providers, such as community doctors' offices, to receive, store, and administer the vaccine.

However, providers should always be aware of the expiration date of the vaccine, as it may expire before the 30-day storage allowance.

Visit [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov) for more information, or access the updated EUA at [cvdvaccine-us.com](https://www.cvdvaccine-us.com).

## Moderna Larger Volume COVID-19 Vaccine Vials Available for Ordering in LINKS



The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine will be available for ordering in LINKS in a new maximum 15 dose vial, starting Thursday, May 17, 2021. The vial will remain the same size but will be filled with a higher volume.

A new National Drug Code (NDC) has been issued for the larger volume Moderna COVID-19 vial, which has been given a range of 13-15 doses in the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).

- **NDC 80777-273-98** Carton of 10 multiple-dose vials, each vial containing a maximum of 15 doses: range 13-15 doses (0.5 mL)

## Clinical Considerations

The Moderna larger volume vial may contain 15 – 0.5 mL doses of vaccine. However, it will not always be possible to extract the 15<sup>th</sup> dose. This is based on the overfill in the vial and the type of syringes used to administer the vaccine. Therefore, vaccination providers should expect to withdraw 13-15 doses from each vial.

- Each dose must contain 0.5mL of the vaccine.
- When the amount of vaccine remaining in the vial is not a complete 0.5mL dose, discard the vial and the residual vaccine regardless of the number of doses withdrawn. Do NOT save vials to combine residual vaccine from more than one vial to get a complete dose. An unextracted 15th dose does NOT count as waste.
- Vaccination sites should continue to reliably extract 10 doses from the current volume vial and plan to extract 14 doses from the new larger volume vial using the ancillary kit supplies provided.

## Ancillary Kits

- Ancillary kits will be reconfigured to extract a maximum of 14 doses per vial, plus a 5% surplus to account for damage or wastage.
- Moderna worked closely with CDC and United States Pharmacopeia (USP) to test combinations of available needle and syringe supplies to optimize the number of available doses.
- Results demonstrate that a combination of low dead-volume and non-low dead-volume syringes and needles may be required to consistently extract 11 and 15 doses from both vials addressed in the EUA. Ancillary kits for the Moderna large volume vials will be configured to support 14 doses per vial (minimum order: 140 doses). In keeping with the way ordering works today, awardees and partners will place vaccine orders and VTrckS will automatically add the corresponding ancillary kit to match the vaccine that is ordered.
- United States Government (USG) cannot provide supplies to withdraw the 15th dose. If a provider chooses to withdraw the 15th dose from the vial, USG cannot replace the supplies used or provide additional syringes.

## Moderna Ordering

With the increase in Moderna vial volume, there are some important things to keep in mind regarding vaccine ordering.

- When ordering Moderna vaccine, it is possible you will still receive 10 dose vials.
- Morris and Dickson, our in-state redistribution partner, still has Moderna 10 dose vials they are storing and delivering. Please make sure you check the NDC number when inputting doses in LINKS.

- There will likely be a mix of 10 dose and 14 (max 15) dose vials delivered to providers for the foreseeable future. Even if you received a certain presentation in the first delivery, the presentation could be different in a subsequent delivery.
- Providers should make every effort to avoid wastage of any Moderna doses and schedule second dose patients in an effort to use all doses.
- As usual, providers should not delay the vaccination of any individual due to the fact that you may not have enough appointments set to exhaust all vaccine remaining in a punctured vial. The state and CDC understand that some unavoidable vaccine wastage will occur in these instances.

For any questions regarding this guidance, contact the Louisiana Immunization Program at [la.immunization@la.gov](mailto:la.immunization@la.gov).

## Summary of COVID-19 State of Vaccine Confidence Insights Report

### Findings

- CDC's recent announcement of expanded guidance for fully vaccinated people was met with confusion in the news media and among consumers online. Unanswered questions about the implications of new guidance may undermine trust in COVID-19 vaccines and the US vaccination system.
- To confront lagging vaccination rates, states and jurisdictions are employing novel tactics to reduce remaining access barriers and add incentives to reward vaccination. Online discussions of incentives are polarized, with some people welcoming the developments and others feeling suspicious of them, which could be a threat to vaccine confidence for some.
- Consumers are receiving bills for COVID-19 vaccination, even though COVID-19 vaccines are free and are offered regardless of insurance or immigration status.

### Ways to Take Action

Federal, state, and local partners should continue to work together to increase transparency around the rationale for updated guidance, respond to gaps in information, and confront misinformation with evidence-based messaging. The goal of these efforts is to increase confidence in COVID-19 vaccine and expand vaccine uptake more broadly. Communication efforts should be expanded to address concerns and questions about vaccine effectiveness and guidance for fully vaccinated individuals. Additional research could provide a better understanding of the role that incentives play in a person's motivation and intent to get vaccinated.

For more information, read the [NAPR COVID-19 State of Vaccine Confidence Insights Report](#).

## LOUISIANA COVID-19 VACCINE DEMOGRAPHICS

### SERIES COMPLETED BY RACE:

- **White:** 60.32%
- **Black:** 28.08%
- **American Indian:** 0.30%
- **Asian:** 2.76%
- **Native Hawaiian:** 0.20%
- **Unknown:** 1.35%
- **Other:** 6.99%

### SERIES COMPLETED BY AGE:

- **5-17:** 0.75%
- **18-29:** 9.26%
- **30-39:** 11.07%
- **40-49:** 12.57%
- **50-59:** 17.74%
- **60-69:** 23.41%
- **70+:** 25.18%

### SERIES COMPLETED BY GENDER:

- **Female:** 56.52%
- **Male:** 43.19%
- **Unknown:** 0.29%

All breakdowns shown here are for Louisiana residents only. Race data completeness is expected to improve as we continue our outreach with vaccine providers.

## Good Reads

### Vaccine Divide: Louisiana Targeting Rural Towns to Boost COVID-19 Vaccination Rates

– This article talks about how the Louisiana Department of Health is partnering with local leaders to make vaccines more accessible as part of a strategy to address disparities.

Read more at [wdsu.com](http://wdsu.com).

### LSU Faculty Members Want COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate for Students

– This article talks about how LSU faculty members are requesting a COVID-19 vaccination mandate for all LSU students.

Read more at [wafb.com](http://wafb.com).

### N.O. Health Department Chief Updates City Council on Vaccination Rates and Response to Relaxed Mask Guidance

– This article talks about current vaccination rates and the mask mandate in New Orleans.

Read more at [fox8live.com](http://fox8live.com).