



COVID-19 VACCINE: What You Need to Know

LAST UPDATED: 2/18/2021

Current COVID-19 vaccines

There are two COVID-19 vaccines currently in use: the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (commonly called the Pfizer vaccine) and the Moderna vaccine.

Safe and effective

Vaccines are approved for use by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA authorization means that trials have proven the vaccine an effective defense against COVID-19. The FDA and the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will continue to monitor safety and effectiveness data.

Safety is a top priority. No steps were skipped during the clinical trials and data review process for COVID-19 vaccines. The COVID vaccines are being held to the same standards as other vaccines to make sure they are safe.

No cost to the patient

While we remain in the pandemic, the federal government has ensured that vaccines are made available to those in need without cost to the individual. A provider cannot ask a patient for payment, though they can bill insurance for a vaccine administration fee or the federal government if the person is uninsured. A provider also may not bill for a regular office visit to administer the vaccine.

Who gets it right now

The first round of vaccines in Louisiana (Phase 1A) is being given to hospital personnel, staff and residents of nursing homes and long-term-care facilities, and frontline responders to serve as vaccinators (Emergency Medical Services, fire personnel and law enforcement).

Vaccines are also available in a **very limited amount** to any and all of the following groups of Phase 1B, Tier 1:

- Persons 65 and older
- Dialysis providers and patients
- Ambulatory and outpatient providers and staff
 - Behavioral health providers and staff
 - Urgent care clinic providers and staff
 - Community care providers and staff
 - Dental providers and staff
 - Non-emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) providers and staff
- Professional home care providers (including hospice workers) and home care recipients (including older and younger people with disabilities over the age of 16 who receive community or home-based care, as well as clients of home health agencies)
- American Sign Language (ASL) and foreign language interpreters and Support Service Providers (SSPs) working in community and clinic-based settings, and clients who are both deaf and blind
- Health-related support personnel (lab staff, mortuary staff who have contact with corpses, pharmacy staff)
- Schools of allied health students, residents and staff



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- Law enforcement and other first responders
- Louisiana Unified Command Group
- State and local essential COVID emergency response personnel
- Some elections staff ahead of March and April elections
- Teachers and any other support staff working on site in K-12 or daycare
- All pregnant persons
- Individuals ages 55-64 with at least one of the conditions listed by the CDC as placing them at an “increased risk of severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19”
 - Cancer
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
 - Down syndrome
 - Heart conditions including but not limited to heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies
 - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
 - Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30kg/m² or higher but less than 40kg/m²)
 - Severe obesity (BMI greater than 40kg/m²)
 - Sickle cell disease
 - Smoking
 - Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Who’s next

In no particular order, the next groups who will be eligible to receive vaccines (Phase 1B, Tier 2) are:

- Judiciary personnel
- Frontline essential government personnel
- Department of Homeland Security personnel, National Guard (non-COVID deployed, federal intelligence and security personnel, military personnel)
- Corrections officers and jailers
- Homeless shelter and other congregate group home/center staff
- Institutes of higher education faculty and staff
- Clergy
- Food processing and agricultural workers
- Veterinarians and veterinary support staff
- Postal personnel
- Public transit workers
- Grocery store workers and other deemed frontline essential workers

LDH will make an announcement when vaccines become available to these groups.



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General public

LDH is following prioritization guidance from ACIP and continues to review and consider how best to apply this guidance to Louisiana. This is a fluid process, and allocation may evolve depending on the amount of vaccine that is ultimately available to Louisiana.

The vaccine is likely to become more widely available for the general population in late spring/summer 2021. When this happens, having a large portion of the population vaccinated is our best shot at a return to some form of normalcy. Based on conversations with our federal partners, we are encouraged that Louisiana will receive enough doses to vaccinate everyone who wants a shot.