COVID-19 VACCINE: What You Need to Know
LAST UPDATED: 3/12/2021

Current COVID-19 vaccines
There are three COVID-19 vaccines currently in use: the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (commonly called the Pfizer vaccine), the Moderna vaccine and the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine.

Safe and effective
All three vaccines are 100% effective at preventing serious hospitalizations and deaths.

Vaccines are authorized for use by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), meaning trials have proven the vaccines 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
The federal government is making vaccines available at no cost. You cannot be charged for a vaccine or a regular office visit to receive a vaccine, but your insurance may be billed an administration fee or the federal government if you are uninsured.

Who gets it right now
Phase 1A:
- Hospital personnel
- Staff and residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- Frontline responders to serve as vaccinators (Emergency Medical Services, fire personnel and law enforcement).

Phase 1B, Tier 1 (in very limited amounts):
High-risk medical conditions (ages 18 and up, or ages 16 and up for Pfizer vaccine only):
- Asthma (moderate to severe)
- Cancer
- Cerebrovascular disease (affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain)
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Cystic fibrosis
- Down syndrome
- Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies
- Hypertension or high blood pressure
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- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines
- Overweight (body mass index [BMI] of 25 or higher but less than 30)
- Obesity (BMI of 30 or higher but less than 40)
- Severe obesity (BMI of 40 or higher)
- Pregnancy
- Severe neurologic conditions, such as dementia
- Sickle cell disease
- Smoking
- Type 1 diabetes mellitus
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus
- Chronic liver disease
- Pulmonary fibrosis (having damaged or scarred lung tissues)
- Thalassemia (a type of blood disorder)

Eligibility by workforce category:

- Ambulatory and outpatient providers and staff
  - Dialysis 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)
- Unpaid family caregivers to people who are receiving licensed home and community-based services
- 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)
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- Schools of allied health students, residents and staff
- Law enforcement and other first responders
- Louisiana Unified Command Group
- Legislators
- 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
- Any staff working in congregate facilities (prisons/jails, shelters, dorms, rehab/detox centers, group homes)

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

- Judiciary 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 the vaccines become available to these groups.

General public
The state is looking to the prioritization guidance from the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and then tailoring that guidance to Louisiana’s context and needs.

The vaccines are 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.