



## COVID-19 VACCINE: Frequently Asked Questions

### Vaccine Distribution

#### WHY ARE THE VACCINES SO IMPORTANT?

COVID-19 is now the leading cause of death in the United States. More than 7,600 Louisianans died from COVID in 2020 — that’s more than the number of deaths caused by accidents, stroke and diabetes combined in Louisiana in 2017. The vaccines against this virus are a critical tool in ultimately ending the pandemic and getting our lives back to normal.

#### HOW IS IT DETERMINED WHO GETS THE VACCINE?

Everyone in Louisiana will have the opportunity to get vaccinated. 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.

#### WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE VACCINE RIGHT NOW?

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

As of January 4, 2021, the vaccine is also available in a **very limited amount** to any and all of the following groups (Phase 1B, Tier 1):

- Persons ages 70 years or older in the community,
- Outpatient clinic providers and clinic staff,
- Urgent care clinic providers and staff,
- Community care clinic providers and staff,
- Behavioral health providers and staff,
- Dialysis providers and recipients,
- Home health service providers and recipients,
- Dental providers and staff, and
- Students, residents, faculty and staff of allied health schools (if not already receiving vaccine or in a plan to receive from their respective schools).

#### WHO IS NEXT IN LINE FOR THE VACCINE?

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

- Health-related support personnel (labs, mortuary, pharmacy)
- Essential governmental response personnel
- Judiciary personnel



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- Department of Homeland Security personnel, National Guard (non-COVID deployed, federal intelligence and security personnel, military personnel
- First responders not covered in Phase 1A
- Corrections officers and jailers
- Medical transportation services
- Homeless shelter and other congregate group home/center staff
- Higher education, K-12 and daycare personnel
- Food processing and agricultural workers
- Postal personnel
- Public transit workers
- Grocery store workers and other deemed frontline essential workers

LDH will make an announcement when vaccine becomes available to these groups.

### **WHEN CAN I, BUSINESSES AND/OR THE GENERAL PUBLIC GET THE VACCINE?**

LDH is following prioritization guidance from ACIP, which recently came out with refined guidance about Phases 1B and 2. LDH 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.

### **WILL THE VACCINE BE HARD TO FIND? HOW WILL THE VACCINE BE DISTRIBUTED?**

LDH has been working closely with the private and public sector, including pharmacies, hospitals and nursing homes, in making the vaccine available at locations in both urban and rural communities throughout the state. HHS has also partnered with national pharmacy chains, and expects to partner with independent pharmacies and regional chains to ensure access.

Louisiana has also been preparing for COVID vaccination clinics throughout flu season. We have held drive-thru flu shot clinics across the state as a “test run” for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Information about vaccine distribution and administration can change quickly. LDH is committed to transparency about the vaccine, including safety concerns, and will continuously educate the public and address questions the public may have.



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### Vaccine Administration

#### WHO WILL ADMINISTER THE VACCINE?

The vaccine will be administered by qualified healthcare professionals. For example, vaccinations for hospital staff are being done on site by the hospital. When it becomes available for nursing homes, CVS and Walgreens will distribute the doses to the facilities and administer the vaccines to the residents. As more vaccine becomes available, people will be able to get it at their doctor's offices, community clinics and pharmacies.

#### HOW AND WHEN WILL NURSING HOME RESIDENTS BE VACCINATED?

All Louisiana nursing homes have signed onto a partnership between the federal government, CVS and Walgreens that calls for pharmacy workers to administer the vaccine in long-term care facilities. The Moderna vaccine is being used in that partnership. As of December 28, 2020, nursing homes began receiving the first 35,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine, which are available to both nursing home residents and staff.

#### WHERE CAN I FIND A PROVIDER TO RECEIVE THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

To locate a provider, you can go to the Louisiana Department of Health website at [covidvaccine.la.gov](https://covidvaccine.la.gov).

#### DO I HAVE TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT OR CAN I JUST WALK IN?

Patients who arrive without an appointment will not be vaccinated. Vaccinations are **BY APPOINTMENT ONLY**. Forming lines during a pandemic is not safe; also, providers need to be able to plan for their vaccinations.

Patients can make an appointment by contacting participating providers. You can find a provider at the Louisiana Department of Health website at [covidvaccine.la.gov](https://covidvaccine.la.gov).

#### CAN I ONLY GET A VACCINE AT A PHARMACY OR ARE THERE OTHER LOCATIONS WHERE I CAN GO?

As of January 4, 2021, 107 pharmacies started offering the vaccine. When other providers begin to make the vaccine available to the general public, those sites will be added to [covidvaccine.la.gov](https://covidvaccine.la.gov).

#### HOW DO I REGISTER FOR THE VACCINE?

The State of Louisiana is not registering people to get a vaccine. Pharmacies and other places that offer the vaccine may create their own, individual registration or appointment process.

#### WHAT DO I DO IF THERE IS NO PROVIDER NEAR ME?

The Department of Health is working every day to enroll more providers in the COVID vaccination program. Our goal is to have at least one provider enrolled in every parish.

#### WILL THE PROVIDER KEEP A WAITING LIST OF REGISTRANTS ONCE IT RUNS OUT OF VACCINE?

Some participating providers are allowing people to add their names to a waiting list once additional vaccines become available.



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### **DO I HAVE TO GO TO A PHARMACY IN MY PARISH?**

No. You can make an appointment with any pharmacy that has the vaccine.

### **HOW MANY DOSES DOES EACH PHARMACY HAVE?**

For the January 4 allocation of vaccines to pharmacies, 107 pharmacies were each offered 100 doses. Those same pharmacies will receive a second shipment soon so they can give the second dose to those who received their first shot.

### **I HAVE HEARD THAT I MIGHT NEED TO GET MORE THAN ONE SHOT TO BE VACCINATED. IS THIS TRUE?**

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are in two doses, administered 3 or 4 weeks apart. You will get the necessary information about the second dose when you get your initial vaccine. The second dose is very important. One dose will not provide long-term protection. People vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine will receive the second dose 21 days after the first dose. Those getting the Moderna vaccine will receive the second dose 28 days after the first dose.

### **DO I HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE SAME PROVIDER FOR THE SECOND DOSE?**

Yes. The provider where you received your first dose will have the record of that vaccination.

### **IS THE VACCINE OK FOR CHILDREN?**

As of now, there is no vaccine for children, though the Pfizer vaccine has been approved for teenagers 16 years of age or older. Until there's a vaccine safely tested for children, there will not be a vaccine for children.

### **HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TO GET VACCINATED?**

COVID vaccines will be free. The federal government has committed to making the COVID-19 vaccine available to every person who wants to be vaccinated. The vaccine will be free to everyone regardless of insurance or ability to pay.

### **IF I HAVE ALREADY HAD COVID-19 AND RECOVERED, DO I STILL NEED TO GET VACCINATED WITH A COVID-19 VACCINE?**

If you have already had COVID-19 and recovered, you should still get a vaccine. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, vaccines are an important tool to protect yourself. Experts also do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19, and natural immunity varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long.



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### Vaccine Development

#### HOW DOES THE VACCINE WORK?

Unlike many vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccine does not contain a dead or a weakened virus that triggers an immune response. Instead, the COVID-19 vaccine contains a genetic instruction manual that tells your immune system how to respond and protect you from exposure to the actual virus.

The technology used in the vaccines is not new. It is called mRNA, or messenger RNA, and it has been around for decades. This is the first time mRNA has been used in a vaccine, but the effect is the same as other vaccines: Your body gets protection without the serious consequences of a severe illness due to COVID-19 exposure.

#### ARE THE VACCINES EFFECTIVE?

Based on evidence from clinical trials, the Pfizer vaccine is 95% effective and the Moderna vaccine is 94.1% effective at preventing COVID-19. The CDC will continue to provide updates as it learns more about how the vaccines work in real-world conditions.

#### ARE THE VACCINES SAFE? WHAT DOES FDA APPROVAL MEAN?

Vaccines are approved for use by the FDA. The FDA authorization means that trials have proven the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines as a safe and effective defense against COVID-19. The FDA and ACIP will continue to monitor safety and effectiveness data.

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

#### HOW CAN I TRUST A VACCINE THAT WAS DEVELOPED SO QUICKLY?

In the past, vaccines have taken many years to develop. The speed of the COVID-19 vaccines is a reflection of more than a decade of mRNA vaccine research and technological advancement.