COVID-19 VACCINE: What You Need to Know
LAST UPDATED: 1/10/2021

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
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.

Who gets it 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’s next
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.

General public
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.