



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 7,000 Louisianans have 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? WHO HAS PRIORITY FOR GETTING IT FIRST?

Everyone in Louisiana will have the opportunity to get vaccinated. LDH is following prioritization guidance from the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Per this federal guidance, the first round of vaccines in Louisiana is being given to frontline healthcare personnel in hospitals and residents and staff of nursing home/long-term-care facilities.

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 is reviewing and considering 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. Requests and inquiries about prioritization for the next phases may be sent to la.immunization@la.gov.

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.

WHERE DO I FIND THE PRIORITIZATION GUIDELINES AND CATEGORIES?

The State of Louisiana's COVID-19 vaccination plan, or Playbook, has been approved by the federal government. The plan, which is subject to change based on ACIP guidelines, includes how different populations are prioritized for receiving the vaccine.

You can view or download the Playbook at <https://ldh.la.gov/covid-19vaccine> — just click on the Vaccine Playbook button. Please note that because the process is fluid and there are questions as to how quickly Louisiana will receive doses, the priority plan is subject to change.

Some vaccine distribution decisions may be made on the basis of need, such as areas with high COVID-19 percent positivity. However, these details have not been finalized yet.



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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.

WILL THE VACCINE DISTRIBUTION PLAN ASSURE THAT THE VACCINE IS AVAILABLE STATEWIDE?

Louisiana's vaccine distribution plan is designed to ensure all communities have equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and information about the vaccine. Please look to our website for information as it becomes available: <https://ldh.la.gov/coronavirus>.

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.

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.



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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?

As a part of the U.S. government's Operation Warp Speed, the vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be no cost to the person receiving the vaccine. However, providers may charge an administrative fee or for an office visit.

I HAVE ALREADY HAD A CASE OF COVID. WILL I STILL NEED TO GET VACCINATED?

There is not enough information to know whether you will need a vaccine if you tested positive for COVID-19 and recovered.

Over the long term, it is possible that we may need to receive a COVID-19 vaccine yearly, the same way we do with the annual flu shot.

ONCE I GET VACCINATED, WILL I STILL HAVE TO WEAR A MASK IN PUBLIC AND OTHER COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS?

There is not enough information to know when it will become safe to stop wearing masks. Experts will need to know more about the protection the COVID-19 vaccines provide before guidance on wearing masks changes. Factors will include how many people get vaccinated and how the virus spreads in communities after vaccinations become more widely available.

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.



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WILL THE VACCINE BE SAFE? WHAT DOES FDA APPROVAL MEAN?

Vaccines are approved for use by the FDA. The FDA authorization means that trials have proven the vaccine 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?

COVID-19 vaccines are being developed faster than other vaccines because there is worldwide urgency. The manufacturers have been given special permission to make the vaccine while they are testing it. This means if a vaccine is approved, there will not be the typical delays between approval and manufacturing.

More resources are available to manufacturers to accelerate vaccine development because of the pandemic, but these accelerations will not impact vaccine safety.