



Frequently Asked Questions

Expansion of COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility to Individuals 65 and Older, Those with Underlying Conditions

The Pennsylvania Department of Health today announced two additional categories of eligible individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccination as part of Phase 1A.

Beginning Tuesday, January 19, all individuals 65 and older, and individuals ages 16-64 with certain medical conditions, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that increase the risk of severe illness from the virus, are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccination. Those conditions are outlined by the CDC [here](#) and are listed below:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Down Syndrome
- Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant, blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines.
- Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 kg/m² or higher but < 40 kg/m²)
- Severe Obesity (BMI ≥ 40 kg/m²)
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Smoking
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Otherwise these underlying conditions do not include the conditions that “might” cause someone to be at increased risk. At this time, only the Pfizer-BioNTech product is approved for those age 16 and 17.

How do I determine if I’m eligible for a vaccine?

With initial supplies limited, the COVID-19 vaccine is being given to those most at-risk of illness and exposure. Currently, vaccines are available to health care workers both paid and unpaid, residents and staff of long-term care facilities, individuals over 65, and individuals 16-64 with certain medical conditions as defined by the CDC that increase the risk of severe illness. Those conditions include:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Down Syndrome
- Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies



- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant, blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines.
- Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 kg/m² or higher but < 40 kg/m²)
- Severe Obesity (BMI ≥ 40 kg/m²)
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Smoking
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus

You can also use the quiz on the [Pennsylvania Vaccine Provider Map](#) to see if you are currently eligible.

How do I locate a vaccine provider?

If you are part of a group that is currently eligible for vaccination, use the [Pennsylvania Vaccine Provider Map](#) to find a place to schedule your vaccine. At this time, vaccination providers can include hospitals, federally qualified health centers and pharmacies.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health is working to ensure providers with vaccine have information publicly available for those currently eligible to be vaccinated. This map will be updated as more locations receive vaccine. Although a provider may have received vaccine, there is **no guarantee that they have open appointments**. Check back frequently as the map will be updated multiple times per week.

If you have questions about the vaccination process or are having trouble using the map to locate a provider, please call the Pennsylvania Department of Health hotline at 1-877-724-3258.

(Note: Philadelphia County is a separate vaccine jurisdiction and has its own information about vaccine [distribution](#).)

How do I make an appointment?

Contact information and registration instructions for each enrolled vaccine provider can be found by clicking on each vaccine provider's pin on the [Pennsylvania Vaccine Provider Map](#). Contact the vaccine provider of your choice directly to schedule an appointment. Note: If you show up at a site without an appointment, you will not receive a vaccine.

What should I do if I can't find an appointment?

The federal government determines how much vaccine Pennsylvania receives and supply is very limited. Even if you are eligible, an appointment may not be immediately available to you due to significantly limited vaccine availability. Pennsylvania is developing a large network of enrolled vaccination provider



sites to serve those currently eligible for vaccination. The vaccine provider map is being updated regularly, so please keep checking for new locations with vaccine supply and checking with vaccine providers for available appointments.

Do I need to bring proof of eligibility when I go to my appointment?

It is recommended that individuals bring proof of eligibility to the vaccination site. This may include an employee ID card, a letter from an employer or affiliated organization, or a pay stub, depending on the specific priority status. If you are eligible because of your age, bring an ID that includes your date of birth (like a driver's license or passport). Individuals qualifying because of underlying medical conditions are not required to bring proof of medical conditions to obtain a vaccine, but you should talk to your provider beforehand to see if vaccination is appropriate for you.

What should I expect at my vaccine appointment?

When you get the vaccine, you and the person administering the vaccine will both need to wear masks that cover your nose and mouth. You will receive a vaccination card that tells you which COVID-19 vaccine you received, the date you received it, and where you received it. The card also will remind you to return for your second dose, and you should take the card with you when you receive your second dose so that vaccination can be documented on the card as well.

How long should I wait in between my first and second shot?

There are two kinds of vaccines authorized for COVID-19. One is manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech, and one is manufactured by Moderna.

- For the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, you should wait 3 weeks (or 21 days) after your first shot.
- For the Moderna vaccine, you should wait 1 month (or 28 days) after your first shot.

You should get your second shot as close to the recommended interval as possible. However, there is no maximum interval between the first and second doses for either vaccine. You should not get the second dose earlier than the recommended interval. Even if you have side effects after the first shot, you should get the second shot unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you otherwise.

What if I experience side effects from the vaccine?

You may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection. Most side effects should go away after a few days. Common side effects include pain on the arm where you got the shot, fever, chills, tiredness, and headache.

If you have pain or discomfort, talk to your doctor about taking an over-the-counter medication, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. To reduce pain or discomfort where you got the shot, apply a clean, cool,



wet washcloth over the area, and use or exercise your arm. To reduce your discomfort from fever, you can also drink plenty of fluids and dress lightly.

In most cases, discomfort from fever or pain is normal. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider if the redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours, or if your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days.

Links:

Pennsylvania Vaccine Provider Map: <https://www.pa.gov/guides/get-vaccinated/>

[CDC List of Qualifying Health Conditions: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html)

[Version 5 of the Interim Vaccination Plan:](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Programs/Immunizations/PA%20Interim%20Vaccine%20Plan%20V.5.pdf)

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Talking Points on Vaccination of Pennsylvanians

- We know that there is significant interest among all Pennsylvanians about when they will get vaccinated.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Health is working to ensure that everyone who wants a COVID-19 vaccine can get it.
 - We must have patience as the amount of vaccine available to Pennsylvanians is extremely limited.
 - It will take several months before there's enough vaccine available for everyone.
- Current science suggests that the approved COVID-19 vaccines will offer some level of protection against all strains of the virus that cause COVID-19.
- While the vaccine supply remains limited, our goals are to prioritize vaccinating people to provide maximum community benefits and minimize harms caused by the virus and prioritize vaccinations accordingly.
- We want to ensure the vaccine is provided in a way that is ethical, equitable and efficient, which is why Pennsylvania is taking a phased approach to provide the vaccine as fast as it can be manufactured and distributed.



- To date, Pennsylvania has received close to one million doses of the two currently approved vaccines to vaccinate health care providers, those living in skilled nursing facilities, and the staff that serve those communities.
- To date, these missions combined have with initial doses close to 480,000 Pennsylvanians.
- We are excited that there is significant interest in getting the COVID-19 vaccination and we urge all Pennsylvanians to continue to be patient in this effort.
- The vaccines that have been approved are safe and effective to protect people from COVID-19.
- We know that as we move forward, additional vaccines will likely be coming to the market as they complete their trials and move through the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization process.
- The Department will continue to share information as frequently as possible.

Vaccination Plan Updates

- The department recently updated its COVID-19 Interim Vaccination Plan to Version 5. This includes the most recent updates from the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and January 12, 2021 comments by U.S. Health and Human Services Operation Warp Speed.
- The updates further define Phase 1A, 1B, and 1C.
- In addition, the plan includes the recommendation from the federal government's Operation Warp Speed that puts those 65 and older, and those with high-risk conditions, such as cancer, COPD, heart conditions, and those who are pregnant into Phase 1A.

Phase 1A

- In Phase 1A there are over 3.5 million people in Pennsylvania that fall into this category. This includes healthcare personnel, residents at long-term care facilities, those 65 and older and those with high-risk conditions, such as cancer, COPD, heart condition and those who are pregnant.
- To put this into perspective, here is a breakdown of several large populations of Pennsylvanians who are in Phase 1A:



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- Those 65 and older: approximately 2.4 million
- Outpatient healthcare providers: approximately 406,000
- Inpatient healthcare providers: approximately 295,000
- Long-term care facility residents: approximately 325,000
- Long-term care facility staff: approximately 118,000
- Skilled nursing facility staff: approximately 116,000
- Skilled nursing facility residents: approximately 88,000
- Pharmacists: approximately 35,000

Phase 1B

- Phase 1B is now those essential workers as defined by the CDC and CISA guidance, and persons working in congregate care settings not otherwise specified as long term care or working in home and community-based settings and who do not meet the definition of health care personnel.
 - Phase 1B essential workers include:
 - First responders;
 - Correctional officers and other workers serving people in congregate care settings not included in Phase 1A;
 - Food and agricultural workers;
 - U.S. Postal Service workers;
 - Manufacturing workers;
 - Grocery store workers;
 - Education workers;
 - Clergy and other essential support for houses of worship;
 - Public transit workers; and
 - Individuals caring for children or in Early Childhood Programs.
 - Also, included in 1B is persons in congregate settings not otherwise specified as a LTCF, and persons receiving home and community-based services.
 - These include a number of facility types, such as behavioral health and rehabilitation facilities, correctional facilities, domestic violence shelters, homeless shelters or other locations for individuals experiencing homelessness, treatment



programs, and several DHS facility types, including home and community-based services and child residential facilities, etc.

- We know that there are well over 1 million essential workers in non-healthcare occupations who are part of Phase 1B, so this group is likely close to 1.5 million individuals.

Phase 1C

- As discussed previously, the further clarification of a Phase 1C is included in this update.
- People in Phase 1C includes essential workers who are not in Phase 1A or Phase 1B. This group includes the following sectors:
 - Transportation and logistics;
 - Water and Wastewater;
 - Food Service;
 - Shelter and Housing;
 - Finance, including bank tellers;
 - Information technology;
 - Communications;
 - Energy, including Nuclear Reactors;
 - Legal Services;
 - Federal, state, county and local government workers, including county election workers, elected officials and members of the judiciary and their staff;
 - Media;
 - Public Safety; and
 - Public Health Workers.

Phase 2

- Phase 2 is for when an expanded supply of vaccine is available and for all individuals not previously covered who are 16 and older and do not have a contraindication to the vaccine.