Vaccine Toolkit

Pennsylvania Department of Health

2021
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About the COVID-19 vaccine

Background

COVID-19 is a serious virus that continues to affect Pennsylvanians and millions of individuals in the United States and across the world. As the pandemic persists, we have been taking measures to help stop the spread by washing our hands, wearing a mask, practicing social distancing and using tools like the COVID Alert PA app.

Public health officials and medical professionals have determined a need for a vaccine in order to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Currently, there are two vaccines available through U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Emergency Use Authorizations (EUAs), the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines. Additional vaccine trials are currently underway through U.S. drug manufacturers Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca, Inovio and Novavax. COVID-19 vaccine is being distributed in a phased approach, with those who need it most getting it first.

More information on vaccinations in Pennsylvania can be found on our website: https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Vaccine/Pages/Vaccine.aspx

Key messages

On vaccine effectiveness and safety

- Vaccines are safe and effective—they are the best way to protect you and everyone around you against a number of serious illnesses.
- Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available, and vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed.
- Based on what we know about vaccines for other diseases, getting a COVID-19 vaccine may help keep you from getting seriously sick even if you do get COVID-19.
- COVID-19 vaccines are being carefully evaluated in clinical trials and will be authorized or approved only if they make it substantially less likely you will get COVID-19.
  - They will go through a rigorous approval process before being distributed.
  - While these vaccines are being developed as quickly as possible, routine processes and procedures remain in place to ensure the safety of any vaccine that is authorized or approved for use.
- The Department of Health will work to identify and report any Adverse Drug
Reactions (ADR) to the CDC and FDA. COVID-19 Vaccine consumers will receive sheets with instructions on how to report ADRs.

- It is important to remember that the COVID-19 vaccine will not be the “cure” for the virus. It is simply another tool in our toolbelt, and we must continue to practice other mitigation efforts, like hand washing, social distancing, wearing a mask and downloading COVID Alert PA.

On the 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 Jan. 12, 2021 comments by U.S. Health and Human Services OWS
• 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:
  o Those 65 and older: approximately 2.4 million
  o Outpatient healthcare providers: approximately 406,000
  o Inpatient healthcare providers: approximately 295,000
  o Long-term care facility residents: approximately 325,000
  o Long-term care facility staff: approximately 118,000
  o Skilled nursing facility staff: approximately 116,000
  o Skilled nursing facility residents: approximately 88,000
  o 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.
  o 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;
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.

- Public Safety; and
- Public Health Workers
BACKGROUND
Getting Pennsylvanians immunized with a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is an essential step in reducing the number of virus-related cases, hospitalizations and deaths. The Department of Health's (Department's) goal is to give anyone who wants to be vaccinated against COVID-19 the opportunity to do so. The Department will use a three-phased approach to distribute the vaccine to 66 counties in Pennsylvania when it becomes available due to limited supply—Philadelphia County will get an allotment of vaccine that is separate from Pennsylvania's state total.

WHO WILL GET THE VACCINE IN PHASE 1?
The Department's three-phased allocation approach follows the recommendations issued by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a federal advisory committee of medical and public health experts, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To develop its recommendations ACIP identified the following four ethical principles as guidance: maximize benefits and minimize harms; promote justice; mitigate health inequities; and promote transparency.

Phase 1 focuses on those with the highest risk or most critical workforce because of the limited doses available.

- Phase 1A: The Department will primarily work with enrolled hospital systems to vaccinate healthcare personnel. The Department will also utilize the Federal Pharmacy Partnership with CVS and Walgreens to vaccinate residents and staff in long-term care facilities. The Federal Pharmacy Partnership is a CDC-run program that provides, at no charge to the facility, on-site vaccinations of long-term care residents and staff.
- Phase 1B: First responders, critical workers, and people with high-risk conditions will be vaccinated. The Department will utilize enrolled partnerships with pharmacies and Federally Qualified Health Centers.

WHY ARE HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL AND LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY STAFF AND RESIDENTS BEING PRIORITIZED IN 1A?
There are several ethical justifications for this approach. First, vaccination of healthcare personnel preserves healthcare services essential to the COVID-19 response and the overall healthcare system, maximizing benefit. Healthcare personnel who work in a unit that treats COVID-19 patients are more likely to be exposed to the virus, potentially requiring them to remain home during a time when their services are critical to the commonwealth's COVID-19 response. We also know that as of December 22, more than 18,100 health care workers have tested positive. This is referred to as a multiplier effect: by vaccinating healthcare personnel, we not only protect the healthcare personnel but also protect the patients that for whom they are caring for. Additionally, across the country long-term care facility residents have experienced the highest rates of death from COVID-19, so vaccination of this vulnerable population helps minimize harms.

Second, the Department has designed this prioritization for Phase 1A in a way that promotes equity. Adopting
the CDC definition of healthcare personnel, which is broad, promotes equity by giving every at-risk individual a
fair opportunity to receive the vaccine and also addresses the elevated occupational risk of exposure for those
who are unable to work from home.

Third, this approach will help address the disproportionate socioeconomic and racial/ethnic impact of the
pandemic on the Latinx and Black or African American communities. While racial and ethnic minorities tend to
be underrepresented as clinicians, they are overrepresented as other lower-wage healthcare personnel. The
broad definition of healthcare personnel encompasses those racial and ethnic minorities in forward-facing roles
who would not be included in the prioritized groups if the first phase focused solely on clinicians.

Lastly, the Department is being transparent by publishing Pennsylvania's COVID-19 Interim Vaccine Plan. Upon
publishing, the Department noted it is continuing to receive feedback and will be modifying the plan and
posting public updates.

AM I REQUIRED TO GET THE VACCINE?
No, the COVID-19 vaccine will not be mandatory. However, stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools
available. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are
exposed. Other steps, like wearing a mask, physical distancing, washing your hands and downloading COVID
Alert PA will help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus and spreading it to others if you are
exposed. Together, getting the COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC’s recommendations to protect yourself
and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

WILL I BE CHARGED FOR THE VACCINE?
More information on insurance coverage and cost of the vaccine is available on the Pennsylvania Insurance
Department website.

IS IT SAFE?
Yes, COVID-19 vaccines are safe. Every vaccine trial goes through a rigorous approval process before any
vaccine is distributed. We understand that some people may be concerned about getting vaccinated. While
these vaccines are being developed as quickly as possible, routine processes and procedures remain in place
to ensure the safety of any vaccine that is authorized or approved for use. Safety is a top priority, and there
are many reasons to get vaccinated. These include protecting yourself, your loved ones and your community.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHERE TO FIND THE VACCINE?
Once the vaccine is available to the public, the Department will use the CDC's VaccineFinder portal to show
where people can be vaccinated.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION
For more information, view the Department of Health’s Interim Vaccination Plan

More information on COVID-19 can be found on the department’s website: www.health.pa.gov
BACKGROUND
An Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) is used by the FDA to approve the use of safe and effective medical products during a public health emergency to diagnose, treat or prevent serious or life-threatening diseases or conditions. An EUA can be used to approve a number of medical products, including vaccines and COVID-19 tests. Right now, there are several companies working to create a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine and when they are ready, they will submit an EUA request to the FDA for approval.

HOW WILL A COVID-19 VACCINE BECOME AVAILABLE BY EUA?
Vaccine manufacturers are following this process to make a COVID-19 vaccine available through an EUA:
- First, manufacturers start the development process that includes tens of thousands of participants to gather nonclinical, clinical and manufacturing information needed by the FDA to determine if the known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks of a vaccine to prevent COVID-19. This is also known as a clinical trial.
- Once the manufacturers get enough information on how well the vaccine prevents COVID-19, the manufacturer will discuss with the FDA and a data safety monitoring board will review the data. Based on this data, and additional input from the FDA, manufacturers will then decide whether and when they should submit an EUA request to the FDA.
- After the FDA receives an EUA request, scientists and physicians will examine all of the information included in the submission.
- While the FDA reviews the submission, they will schedule a public meeting among their Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee where experts will discuss the safety and efficacy data so the public and scientific community can clearly understand what data is being used to make a decision.
- After the advisory committee meeting, the FDA will use the advisory’s input and continue to evaluate the submission to determine if the available data support an EUA of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Once an EUA for a COVID-19 vaccine is issued, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will give an approval after considering the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices’ (ACIP) recommendation.
- Lastly, the CDC will issue a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report that will lay out all the specifics of the vaccine.

DOES THIS MEAN THE COVID-19 VACCINES GOING THROUGH AN EUA ARE LESS SAFE?
No. It is important to remember that in public health emergencies, such as a pandemic, the development process may not follow routine procedures. However, these COVID-19 vaccines are going through clinical trials that are being conducted according to the rigorous standards set by the FDA. With advanced technology available today, this process is able to be expedited. For an EUA to be issued for a vaccine, the FDA must determine that the known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION
For information on the EUA process for vaccines, visit the FDA. For information on COVID-19 vaccines in Pennsylvania, visit the department’s website. Help is available, contact the Crisis Text Line by texting PA to 741-741.
#COVID19 vaccines are not going to be the cure, but another tool in the COVID-19 toolkit. Clinical studies show that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get the virus, like the #flu vaccine. #VaccinesWork

There’s a lot of information being released about the different #COVID19 vaccines in development—and you probably have a lot of questions. Check out our COVID-19 vaccine frequently asked questions: [https://bit.ly/PACOVID19Vaccine](https://bit.ly/PACOVID19Vaccine)

Vaccines are safe and effective—and the best way to protect yourself and your family from serious diseases. Getting your vaccinations can help protect others, like those with compromised immune systems, who can't get vaccinated. #VaccinesWork #protectedtogether

Staying masked up and getting the #COVID19 vaccine each offer their own protections from the virus. Add the #COVID19 vaccine to your toolkit. Stay masked up. #StopTheSpread #ProtectedTogether

No one tool alone is going to stop the #COVID19 pandemic. A combination of getting a COVID-19 #vaccine (when available to you), wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, washing your
hands often, avoiding gathering and downloading COVID Alert PA are all needed.

Q: How do #mRNA #vaccines work? A: mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a piece of a protein, without interacting with our DNA, to trigger an immune response and build immunity to virus that causes #COVID19. Learn about mRNA vaccines + how they work: http://bit.ly/3nGX9uF

Q: Is natural immunity from #COVID19 better than vaccine immunity? A: Getting COVID-19 may offer some immunity. Experts don't know how long it lasts + risk of severe illness/death outweighs benefits of natural immunity. Vaccine will create antibody response w/o having sickness.

FACT: #COVID19 vaccination helps keep you from getting COVID-19. Vaccines currently available in the US are more than 90% effective at preventing COVID-19, according to clinical trials—and are important tools to stop the pandemic. More COVID-19 facts: https://bit.ly/3nm2Wqa

The #COVID19 vaccine will NOT give you #COVID19. Having symptoms after you get a vaccine is normal + sign your immune system is learning to fight the virus.
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Q: Is natural immunity from #COVID19 better than vaccine immunity?
A: Getting COVID-19 may offer some natural protection, known as immunity. But experts don't know how long this protection lasts, and the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity. COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by creating an antibody response without having to experience sickness

FACT: #COVID19 vaccination helps keep you from getting COVID-19. Vaccines currently available in the US are more than 90% effective at preventing COVID-19, according to clinical trials—and are important tools to stop the pandemic.
Additional Resources

More information on vaccinations in Pennsylvania can be found on the Department of Health’s website: [https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Vaccine/Pages/Vaccine.aspx](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Vaccine/Pages/Vaccine.aspx)

To find out if you are eligible for the vaccine, use the Department of Health’s Vaccine Eligibility tool: [https://www.pa.gov/guides/get-vaccinated/#Step1ChecktoSeeifYoureEligible](https://www.pa.gov/guides/get-vaccinated/#Step1ChecktoSeeifYoureEligible)

If you are eligible to be vaccinated, find a provider on the Department of Health’s provider map: [https://padoh.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0ea7864ea98d423daa3f1711e3c6a09e](https://padoh.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0ea7864ea98d423daa3f1711e3c6a09e)

Find up the most recent vaccine data by using the Department of Health’s Vaccine Dashboard (scroll down to the middle of page): [https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Vaccine/Pages/Vaccine.aspx#data](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Vaccine/Pages/Vaccine.aspx#data)