

Talking Points on Vaccination of Pennsylvanians

Updated Pennsylvania Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Program timeline:

- **April 12** all residents in Phase 1C will be eligible to start scheduling vaccination appointments.
- **April 19**, all residents age 16 and older will be eligible to start scheduling vaccination appointments.
- Anyone that is eligible through the special initiatives or 1A that has not yet been vaccinated can still be vaccinated throughout the program.
- As public health experts say, there are three ways to get through a pandemic:
 - Containment (case investigations, contact tracing, testing)
 - Mitigation (masking, practicing good hygiene, orders in place)
 - Therapeutics (medication, vaccine)
- The department recommends getting tested for COVID-19 if you come in contact with an infected individual or if you are experiencing symptoms.
 - The [symptoms & testing webpage](#) is up to date on locations across the commonwealth offering COVID-19 testing.
 - There is also list information about free testing clinics.
- The breakdown of individuals in each phase is on the vaccine distribution page:
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Vaccine/Pages/Distribution.aspx>
- Version 8 of the Pennsylvania Interim Vaccination Plan was uploaded to the website:
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Programs/Immunizations/PA%20Interim%20Vaccine%20Plan%20V.8.pdf>.



- The **allocations of vaccine from the Federal government** are currently fluctuating, but **are starting to slowly increase** over the upcoming weeks.
- As long as the Pennsylvania vaccination program (66 counties outside of Philadelphia) continues to receive an insufficient amount of vaccine to fulfill the demand, providers will need to prepare first and second doses accordingly based on the available amount of vaccine.
- Therefore, **everyone**, regardless if you are in Phase 1C or later, **needs to have patience** during this process. While waiting, you can take the following steps to prepare for getting vaccinated:
 - Continue wearing a mask, washing your hands, and social distancing;
 - Download the COVID Alert PA app to make sure you get an exposure notification alert if you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19;
 - Avoid gatherings, even small gatherings, which can spread COVID-19; and
 - Visit the COVID-19 vaccine sub-site of the DOH website to see the latest updates to the vaccination plan and process.
 - Fill out the Your Turn tool to determine eligibility for getting the COVID-19 vaccine.
- If you have scheduled appointments at numerous places as part of your attempt to get vaccinated, but have already received your dose of vaccine, we urge you to call those other locations and cancel the remaining appointments.

Vaccine Data on Open Data

- The department posts a number of pieces of data to Open Data. One of these provides first and second dose allocations. We did this to clearly show which providers are receiving first dose allocations, so that people know where to schedule appointments, and which providers are receiving second dose vaccines, in order for people to schedule their second dose appointments:
 - First dose data: <https://data.pa.gov/Health/COVID-19-Weekly-1st-Dose-Vaccine-Allocated-by-Penn/qsii-pka7>
 - Second dose data: <https://data.pa.gov/Health/COVID-19-Pennsylvania-Vaccine-Providers-2nd-Dose-V/8jae-5d8i>



- The Federal Pharmacy Partnership and Retail Pharmacy Partnership data is also now posted to Open Data. The FPP data includes the number of vaccinations of staff and residents at each facility.
 - FPP Open Data: <https://data.pa.gov/Health/COVID-19-Federal-Pharmacy-Partners-Long-Term-Care-/iwiy-rwzp>
 - RPP Open Data: <https://data.pa.gov/Health/COVID-19-Retail-Pharmacy-Partners-Vaccine-Allocati/vxbs-jbjq>

Vaccine Order Updates

- Dr. Levine signed an [order](#) on Dec. 30, which has now been updated and signed by Acting Secretary Alison Beam, directing vaccine providers to designate at least 10 percent of each vaccine shipment received for vaccination of phase 1a non-hospital affiliated health care personnel and EMS personnel. This went into effect Jan. 6, 2021.
- Acting Secretary Alison Beam signed an [order](#) on March 16, requiring skilled nursing facilities to report information to the department to determine the status and facility needs for vaccination of residents and staff of skilled nursing facilities. The order states:
 - All skilled nursing facilities licensed in the commonwealth must complete the initial, and any subsequent surveys.
 - Skilled nursing facilities must complete the required fields in the initial survey by March 23, 2021.
 - Due dates for responses to subsequent survey requests will be determined by the department, as needed.
- On Feb. 12, 2021, Acting Secretary Beam [ordered providers](#) to take a number of steps to administer the vaccine in a timely manner and increase access to vaccinations. This includes administering 80 percent of the vaccine first-doses received within seven days of receipt of those doses; administering vaccine in accordance with the state's phased vaccination rollout; requiring providers to have an operational online system to directly schedule appointments and informing the public about appointment availability; requiring providers to have a phone number for prompt access to live representatives or agents who directly schedule appointments and



informing the public about appointment availability for the administration of any applicable doses of the vaccine received by the vaccine provider; and requiring providers to report data to the department within 24 hours of vaccination, including race and ethnicity data.

- On March 15, Acting Secretary Beam [amended that order](#) directing providers actively receiving vaccine work to schedule appointments, within their best efforts, for each individual who requests an appointment by March 31. This would include all eligible individuals, including those outside the vaccine provider's current patient network. These vaccinations do not need to occur by March 31, but providers must make their best effort to schedule them by that date.
- The March 25 [amended order](#) requires that when requested by the department or its representative, Those providers actively receiving vaccine must coordinate with the applicable local Area Agency on Aging (AAAs) and MCOs to schedule appointments for older adults and other eligible persons under Phase 1A.
 - Find more information about the order [here](#).
 - Find FAQs on the order [here](#).

Second Doses Are Secure

- The Pennsylvania Department of Health is working to ensure that second doses are secure for everyone.
- There are no differences in the makeup of the first dose of vaccine and the second dose of vaccine.
- If you got your first dose of vaccine already, you should get your second dose from the same provider.
- You can call your first dose vaccine provider for more information.
- The department is actively having conversations with providers, to ensure they have the appropriate doses needed and understand the process for securing second doses of vaccine.
- **Some providers may need to stretch second doses by a week or two, but everyone will receive their second dose.**



- The department is implementing several steps to improve our systems, monitoring and communication with providers to ensure these types of issues do not occur again.

COVID-19 Website Resources

- The Department of Health launched a new tool called Your Turn to help Pennsylvanians understand where they fall in the vaccine prioritization effort and to be alerted when it is their turn to schedule an appointment for the COVID-19 vaccine via email.
 - We added several languages, including Spanish, Chinese and German to the Your Turn tool earlier this week.
 - We added a provider zip code search feature to make it easier to find vaccine providers near you.
- On March 18, the department announced a new Vaccine Provider Map using the Google map platform. This transition allows for a better viewing experience on mobile devices, and also the ability to provide additional information.
- Currently, blue circles represent locations receiving state allocation, and light blue diamonds represent retail pharmacy partners receiving federal allocation.
- Only those locations receiving first dose allocations in a given week will be featured on the map, to assist in determining which providers may have appointments available. However, receiving allocations of doses does not equal appointments, and the provider is the best source of whether they have appointments available.
- Blue dots are used to represent all enrolled vaccine providers that are activated within for COVID-19 vaccination efforts.
- The vaccine [dashboard](#) shows how many people have been vaccinated by county, except Philadelphia, including by day. It also gives demographic information on the health care personnel who have been vaccinated.
- A [commonwealth COVID-19 vaccination guide](#) explains the current process for getting a vaccine. Pennsylvanians with questions about the vaccination



process, or those who need assistance scheduling a vaccine appointment or completing the Your Turn tool, please contact the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-724-3258 and someone will be happy to help you.

- The Health Hotline menu can be heard in both English and Spanish. This is done so by connecting callers with a translator to convey information back and forth between the agent and the caller.
- All of the locations that received vaccine and how much they have received can be found on the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution [webpage](#).
- Vaccine [dashboard data](#) can also be found on the website to find more information on the doses administered and showcase demographic information.
- Pennsylvanians can provide feedback on the Pennsylvania COVID-19 Interim Vaccination Plan on the [website](#).
- There are also [FAQs](#) on the website.

Vaccines

- Vaccination is a critical tool in bringing this unprecedented pandemic to an end.
- There are three different COVID-19 vaccines available: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Janssen (Johnson & Johnson).
- The Pfizer no longer requires the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to be kept ultra-cold, if used within two weeks.
- Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) is a single-dose vaccine, while Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna are two dose vaccines.
- The federal government invested in the development of multiple COVID-19 vaccines with the goal that one or more would be found safe and effective and widespread use would help bring the pandemic to an end.
- Having different types of vaccines available for use, especially ones with different storage and handling requirements and dosing recommendations,



can offer more options and flexibility for jurisdictions and vaccine providers.

- All the available vaccines have been proven effective at preventing serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 disease.
- Getting vaccinated with the first vaccine available to you can help protect you from COVID-19.

- Counting data to get the total doses administered:
 - Take the number of fully covered individuals, multiply it by 2. Then subtract that number by the total number of Janssen (Johnson & Johnson). Lastly, add that number to the number of people partially covered to get the total number of doses administered.

- On Dec. 18, 2020, the FDA granted the Moderna vaccine an EUA.
- The department is following the guidance issued by the CDC ACIP and FDA for usage of Moderna for anyone ages 18 and older.

- Moderna side effects include:
Taken from the Moderna Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) Factsheet found at [Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine EUA Fact Sheet for Healthcare Providers \(fda.gov\)](#):
- Do not get the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine if you have a known history of a severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to any component of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine (see Full EUA Prescribing Information).
- For awareness, the warnings label of the Moderna vaccine reads: Appropriate medical treatment to manage immediate allergic reactions must be immediately available in the event an acute anaphylactic reaction occurs following administration of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine.
- Monitor Moderna COVID-19 vaccine recipients for the occurrence of immediate adverse reactions according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/>). Immunocompromised persons, including individuals receiving immunosuppressant therapy, may have a diminished immune response to the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine. The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine may not protect all vaccine recipients.



- The adverse reactions for the Moderna vaccine include:
 - pain at the injection site
 - fatigue
 - headache
 - myalgia
 - arthralgia
 - chills
 - nausea/vomiting
 - axillary swelling/tenderness
 - fever
 - swelling at the injection site
 - erythema at the injection site

- (See Full EUA Prescribing Information) Additional adverse reactions, some of which may be serious, may become apparent with more widespread use of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine.

- On Dec. 11, 2020, the FDA granted the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine an EUA.
- The department is following the guidance issued by the CDC ACIP and FDA for usage of Pfizer-BioNTech for anyone ages 16 and older.

- The Pfizer no longer requires the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to be kept ultra-cold, if used within two weeks.

- Pfizer side effects include:
Taken from the Pfizer Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) Factsheet found at [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine EUA Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers \(fda.gov\)](#):
- WHO SHOULD NOT GET THE PFIZER-BIONTECH COVID-19 VACCINE?
You should not get the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine if you:
 - had a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of this vaccine
 - had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient of this vaccine.

- WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE PFIZER-BIONTECH COVID-19 VACCINE?
Side effects that have been reported with the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine include:



- injection site pain
 - tiredness
 - headache
 - muscle pain
 - chills
 - joint pain
 - fever
 - injection site swelling
 - injection site redness
 - nausea
 - feeling unwell
 - swollen lymph nodes (lymphadenopathy)
- There is a remote chance that the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction. A severe allergic reaction would usually occur within a few minutes to one hour after getting a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. For this reason, your vaccination provider may ask you to stay at the place where you received your vaccine for monitoring after vaccination.
 - Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include:
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Swelling of your face and throat
 - A fast heartbeat
 - A bad rash all over your body
 - Dizziness and weakness
- These may not be all the possible side effects of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. Serious and unexpected side effects may occur. Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine is still being studied in clinical trials.
- **WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS?**

If you experience a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1, or go to the nearest hospital. Call the vaccination provider or your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.



- In the event a patient cannot receive their second shot, the Department would like to provide clarification on what providers should do with the second dose. Providers should allow the vaccine expiration date guide their response. That is, if someone misses their second dose, and there is still some time to “save” a dose without vaccine expiring, they should do so and make every effort to get that individual rescheduled. If, however, vaccine is on the verge of expiring, providers should use it for a first dose and make plans to have vaccine available for the second dose for both the rescheduled and new patient.
- On Saturday, Feb. 27, 2021, the FDA granted the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine an EUA.
- The department is following the guidance issued by the CDC ACIP and FDA for usage of Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) for anyone ages 18 and older.
- Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) side effects include:
Taken from the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) Factsheet found at <https://www.fda.gov/media/146305/download>:
- WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE JANSSEN COVID-19 VACCINE?

Side effects that have been reported with the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine include:

- Injection site reactions: pain, redness of the skin and swelling.
- General side effects: headache, feeling very tired, muscle aches, nausea, and fever. There is a remote chance that the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction.
- A severe allergic reaction would usually occur within a few minutes to one hour after getting a dose of the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine. For this reason, your vaccination provider may ask you to stay at the place where you received your vaccine for monitoring after vaccination. Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include:
 - Difficulty breathing,
 - Swelling of your face and throat,
 - A fast heartbeat,



- A bad rash all over your body,
- Dizziness and weakness.

These may not be all the possible side effects of the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine. Serious and unexpected effects may occur. The Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine is still being studied in clinical trials.

- **WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS?**

If you experience a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1, or go to the nearest hospital. Call the vaccination provider or your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away. Report vaccine side effects to FDA/CDC Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). The VAERS toll-free number is 1-800-822-7967 or report online to <https://vaers.hhs.gov/reportevent.html>. Please include “Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine EUA” in the first line of box #18 of the report form.

Guidance

- Given the currently limited information on how much the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines may reduce transmission in the general population and how long protection lasts, **vaccinated persons should continue to follow all current guidance to protect themselves and others**. This includes wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, avoiding crowds, washing hands often, following CDC travel guidance, **following quarantine guidance after an exposure to someone with COVID-19**, and following any applicable workplace or school guidance, including guidance related to personal protective equipment use or SARS-CoV-2 testing.
- It’s important that people take every precaution to protect themselves against COVID-19. This means, Pennsylvanians will still need to wear a mask, social distance, and follow other mitigation efforts like frequent hand-washing, using hand sanitizer and avoiding large gatherings.
- Wait at least 14 days before getting any other vaccine, including a flu or shingles vaccine, if you get your COVID-19 vaccine first. And if you get another vaccine first, wait at least 14 days before getting your COVID-19 vaccine.

- If a COVID-19 vaccine is inadvertently given within 14 days of another vaccine, you do **not** need to restart the COVID-19 vaccine series; you should still complete the series on schedule. When more data are available on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines administered simultaneously with other vaccines, CDC may update this recommendation.
- The state's Federal Pharmacy Partners, CVS and Walgreens, are working to vaccinate all those in long-term care facilities that are part of the program. For facilities that have three clinics, first doses may be provided at the first and second clinics. At the third clinic, only second doses will be provided. After the completion of the two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series, facilities will return to working with the vaccination provider it uses for routine vaccines.

Vaccine Equity

- The department is prioritizing ensuring that providers use an equitable approach to vaccinate their populations once vaccine delivery is received.
- **There is a Health Equity & COVID-19 webpage discussing vaccination equity efforts:**
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Health-Equity.aspx>.
- It's very important to not compare what is being done in Pennsylvania to other states. We have two jurisdictional programs (Philadelphia and Pennsylvania's other 66 counties) to vaccinate Pennsylvanians. Additionally, Pennsylvania's population, size, population 65 and older, population in long-term care facilities and other factors make a comparison with other states inaccurate. We are working to vaccinate our Phase 1A populations as quickly as possible, as vaccine is available to administer. Vaccinating individuals in our nursing homes, personal care homes, assisted living residences and other long-term care facilities has been a significant task, and we appreciate the work of the Federal Pharmacy Partnership and Rite Aid in this.



- Pennsylvania is also being sure that second doses will be available when it is appropriate. This is different from some other states, where they have been using all doses as first doses. By reserving second doses from a state level, we want vaccine providers to use all vaccine received as first doses, and we will ensure they receive their second doses appropriately. We are committed to ensuring that second doses are there for individuals when they need them.
- Public health crises have the potential to affect all populations but typically have more severe impacts on underserved populations, making those populations more vulnerable to severe illness and death. A first step in developing an equitable vaccine distribution plan is to understand and identify populations most at risk of contracting COVID-19 and severe illness.
- Review of Census data, population social risk factors, health statuses, targeted communication campaigns and education material—including partnership trusted messenger service efforts, and translation service assistance are all strategies studied and implemented. The Department’s Health Equity Response Team continues to provide insight on communication strategies and vaccine rollout logistics for their areas of expertise. This working relationship reinforces public-private partnerships between the commonwealth and stakeholders.
- Additionally, the education of providers and laboratories on the importance of reporting race and ethnicity continues to occur to ensure we are collecting the most complete and actionable data to make informed evidence-based decisions.
- Throughout our entire vaccination effort, we will continue to look at vulnerability indexes to ensure that we are removing barriers for vaccine in marginalized communities. There is also a significant need for trusted individuals in communities to share accurate information for individuals to make the best-educated decision around vaccinations.