NCDHHS Shares Updated Rollout Plan for COVID-19 Vaccinations

Raleigh

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The information below has been updated. For the latest on who is eligible for vaccination in North Carolina, visit YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov (https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/vaccines).

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services today announced it had updated its vaccination plan to align with new federal recommendations issued last week. The changes simplify the vaccine process and continue the state's commitment to first protect health care workers caring for patients with COVID-19, people who are at the highest risk of being hospitalized or dying, and those at high risk of exposure to COVID-19.

"While there is still much to do, we head into 2021 with a powerful tool to stop this pandemic– vaccines," said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. "However, because supplies are very limited, it's going to be several months before vaccines are widely available to everyone. Until most people are vaccinated, everyone needs to continue to wear a mask, wait six feet apart, and wash their hands."

Because vaccine supplies are currently limited, states must make vaccine available in phases. On December 22, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices released updated interim vaccine prioritization recommendations (https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm695152e2.htm?s_cid=mm695152e2_w) for the next phases of vaccinations. North Carolina's updated plan is outlined below.

Current Phase- Phase 1a: Health care workers fighting COVID-19 and long-term care staff and residents.

- Hospitals and local health departments are vaccinating health care workers caring for and working directly with patients with COVID-19 and those giving vaccines. In addition, the federal government is vaccinating long-term care residents and staff.

Phase 1b: Adults 75 years or older and frontline essential workers.
The next phase of vaccinations will open in groups.

- Group 1: Anyone 75 years or older regardless of medical condition or living situation. People do not have to have a chronic health condition.
- Group 2: Health care and frontline essential workers who are 50 years of age or older.
- Group 3: Frontline workers of any age and health care workers of any age, regardless of whether they work directly with COVID-19 patients. This phase is anticipated to begin in early January.

The CDC defines frontline essential workers as first responders (firefighters, police), education (child care, teachers, support staff), manufacturing, corrections officers, public transit, grocery store, food and agriculture, and US postal workers.

Phase 2: Adults at high risk for exposure and at increased risk of severe illness.
In this phase, vaccinations will also open in groups.

- **Group 1:** Anyone ages 65-74 years regardless of medical condition or living situation.
- **Group 2:** Anyone 16-64 years with a medical condition that increases risk of severe disease from COVID-19.
- **Group 3:** Anyone who is incarcerated or living in other close group living settings who has not already vaccinated due to age, medical condition or job function.
- **Group 4:** Essential workers as defined by the CDC who have not yet been vaccinated.

Phase 3: Students.

- College, university and high school students 16 or older.
- Younger children will only be vaccinated when the vaccine is approved for them.

Phase 4: Finally, anyone who wants a COVID-19 vaccine will be able to get one.

All vaccine providers are expected to ensure that vaccine is administered equitably within each group.

NCDHHS has a specific focus on building trust with historically marginalized populations. Longstanding and continuing racial and ethnic injustices in our health care system contribute to lack of trust in vaccines. The department is partnering with trusted leaders and organizations to provide accurate information about COVID-19 vaccines to all North Carolinians and ensure equitable access to vaccines.

More information is available at yourspotyourshot.nc.gov (https://yourspotyourshot.nc.gov).

This press release is related to:

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https://www.ncdhhs.gov/news/press-releases/2020/12/30/ncdhhs-shares-updated-rollout-plan-covid-19-vaccinations