Office of
Governor Tim Walz &
Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan

STATE OF MINNESOTA
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View entire list

Governor Walz Expands Vaccine Eligibility as State Reaches Goal of 70% of Seniors Vaccinated

Newly eligible Minnesotans include those with underlying health conditions and essential frontline workers; Announcement comes weeks ahead of schedule after the state moved quickly to use more vaccine from the federal government

March 9, 2021

[ST. PAUL, MN] — Today, Governor Tim Walz announced that Minnesota is expanding vaccine eligibility as the state reaches its goal of vaccinating 70% of Minnesotans 65 years of age and older this week. The announcement comes several weeks ahead of schedule after the state moved quickly to use more vaccine from the federal government.

As a result, the state will expand eligibility to the next two phases of Minnesotans at once (https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/whos-getting-vaccinated/vaccinated.jsp) , starting Wednesday. Providers have been directed to prioritize people in the first of these phases, which includes Minnesotans with specific underlying health conditions; food processing plant workers; and Minnesotans with rare conditions or disabilities that put them at higher risk of severe illness. Providers will then have the flexibility to provide available appointments to other eligible Minnesotans.

"We asked most Minnesotans to wait patiently while we protected Minnesotans at higher risk and got shots to at least 70% of our seniors. We will hit that milestone on Wednesday – well ahead of schedule. More Minnesotans will now be eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine, beginning this week," said Governor Walz. **"To reach 70% of seniors vaccinated is an incredible accomplishment in itself, but it's not the end goal: we will continue moving full steam ahead until every Minnesotan who wants a shot gets one."**

Seniors have borne the burden of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Walz-Flanagan Administration has been deeply committed to prioritizing senior vaccinations and keeping them safe. Nearly 90% of COVID-19 deaths in Minnesota have come from those age 65 years and over. To ensure maximum impact from the small number of vaccines the state receives each week, Governor Walz issued guidance in February directing providers to vaccinate 70% of adults 65 years of age and older before expanding eligibility to other Minnesotans, and aimed to reach that goal by the end of March.

"This is a landmark day. So many Minnesota seniors at serious risk have now gotten their shot. That is a huge relief for them – and their loved ones," said Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. **"This week, as we continue to follow the science and vaccinate our most vulnerable, even more Minnesotans will have the opportunity to get a vaccine. We are working to ensure we're vaccinating equitably and for the most impact as we continue to provide these life-saving shots to even more Minnesotans."**

Equity in access is a cornerstone of the Walz-Flanagan Administration's vaccination strategy and has been a guiding principal since the first doses arrived in Minnesota. As eligibility expands, the state will continue to prioritize working closely alongside local partners — including Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), community pharmacies and the diverse array of community-based organizations that comprise our COVID-19 Community Coordinators network — to launch new vaccination clinics that specifically serve Minnesota's BIPOC communities. These are equity-focused strategies to ensure fair vaccine access for every Minnesotan, and they will continue to evolve and expand as more vaccine doses arrive from the federal government.

1.8 Million Minnesotans Newly Eligible

In line with that guidance, Minnesota will expand vaccine eligibility this week, more than three weeks ahead of previous goals.

This expedited timeline is a result of the expansive, robust network of options Minnesota stood up to get shots to everyone across the state. Minnesota providers are quickly vaccinating patients as the federal government ships even more doses to states. To provide more flexibility to providers and get critical protection against COVID-19 to even more Minnesotans, two additional phases will be eligible for the vaccine beginning Wednesday.

More than 1.8 million Minnesotans will become eligible to receive a vaccine beginning this week:

- Phase 1b Tier 2 populations, including:

- Minnesotans with specific underlying health conditions: Sickle cell disease, Down syndrome, those in cancer treatment or immunocompromised from organ transplant, oxygen-dependent chronic lung and heart conditions (COPD & CHF)
- Targeted essential workers: Food processing plant workers
- Minnesotans with rare conditions or disabilities that put them at higher risk of severe illness

- Phase 1b Tier 3 populations, including:

- Minnesotans age 45 years and older with one or more underlying medical conditions identified by the CDC (https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/whos-getting-vaccinated/vaccinated.jsp)
- Minnesotans age 16 years and older with two or more underlying medical conditions*
- Minnesotans age 50 years and older in multi-generational housing
- Essential frontline workers: Agricultural, airport staff, additional child care workers not previously eligible, correctional settings, first responders, food production, food retail, food service, judicial system workers, manufacturing, public health workers, public transit, and U.S. Postal Service workers

All Minnesotans who have not received a vaccine should sign up for the COVID-19 Vaccine Connector (https://vaccineconnector.mn.gov/) to get regular updates on vaccine availability and eligibility. In some cases, health care providers or employers will have more information for patients or employees on vaccine availability.

Vaccine shipments from the federal government are increasing, but demand still exceeds supply. As more Minnesotans become eligible to get a shot, they should remain patient as providers vaccinate everyone who is eligible.

The Walz-Flanagan administration is following science, medical evidence, and federal guidelines as eligibility expands. Minnesota is prioritizing people for the vaccine based on underlying health conditions that have been shown to put them at risk of severe COVID-19 illness; or whose workplaces put them at higher risk of contracting this virus.

“Minnesota is national leader in getting doses to people quickly, and that hard work is paying off,” continued Governor Walz. **“Because we have made such tremendous progress vaccinating Minnesotans over 65, we will be able to provide more shots, to more people, much more quickly than expected. This is good news for all Minnesotans. Today, we are one, large step closer to ending this pandemic.”**

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