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TEXAS Health and Human Services | Texas Department of State Health Services

People 65 and Older or With Certain Medical Conditions in Next Phase for COVID-19 Vaccine

News Release

Dec. 21, 2020

The state of Texas will prioritize people who are at the greatest risk of severe disease and death from COVID-19 for the next phase of vaccination. More than 70 percent of COVID-19 deaths in Texas have occurred in people 65 and older, and scientific evidence shows that adults of any age with certain medical conditions have an increased risk of hospitalization and death if they get sick with COVID-19.

At a meeting Dec. 17, the Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel recommended vaccinating these diverse groups in Phase 1B of vaccine distribution to limit the loss of life from COVID-19 and help reduce the burden on the state's hospitals. Texas Department of State Health Services Commissioner John Hellerstedt, MD, has approved that definition.

"The focus on people who are age 65 and older or who have comorbidities will protect the most vulnerable populations," said Imelda Garcia, EVAP chair and DSHS associate commissioner for laboratory and infectious disease services. "This approach ensures that Texans at the most severe risk from COVID-19 can be protected across races and ethnicities and regardless of where they work."

The state is currently in Phase 1A of vaccine distribution, which includes residents of long-term care facilities and front-line health care workers. With an estimated 1.9 million Texans in those groups, it will likely be at least a few weeks before a transition to Phase 1B occurs. The timing will depend on the amount of vaccine provided to Texas and the uptake of vaccine among the priority populations.

The Phase 1B priorities are below, and additional information is available at **dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/immunize/vaccine/EVAP-Phase1B.pdf**. The full EVAP will continue to meet and make recommendations about the prioritization of additional groups for the COVID-19 vaccine.

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Texas Phase 1B COVID-19 Vaccine Priorities

- People 65 years of age and older
- People 16 years of age and older with at least one chronic medical condition that puts them at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19, such as but not limited to:
  - Cancer
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
  - Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies
  - Solid organ transplantation
  - Obesity and severe obesity (body mass index of 30 kg/m2 or higher)
  - Pregnancy
  - Sickle cell disease
  - Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Last updated December 22, 2020