

COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

Updated January 8, 2021

Q: I'm over 75 and my doctor said I'm at high risk. Am I eligible to get the vaccine soon?

A: Yes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends those 75 and older receive the vaccine, and the state has updated Nebraska's vaccination plan to include anyone aged 75 or older in Phase 1B – regardless of whether they're considered high risk.

Vaccinations for those 75 and older are the top priority in Phase 1B, which is expected to begin in the second half of January, or as Phase 1A concludes and more doses are available.

Q. Can I be notified when the vaccine is available in my area?

A: Yes. Local health departments are coordinating vaccination for priority groups. Many are still working to vaccinate those in Phase 1A, but are taking the names of those in Phase 1B who are interested in being vaccinated.

To find out if your local health department is taking names, please visit their website or call their office. Family members and caregivers of those aged 75 or older are encouraged to assist with vaccine sign-up if needed.

In the coming weeks DHHS will launch a website to help Nebraskans register for COVID-19 vaccination to receive updates, scheduling information and follow-up reminders as vaccination moves forward.

The DHHS COVID-19 hotline can also help navigate the sign-up process in your area, and is available at (402) 552-6645, or toll-free (833) 998-2275. The hotline is staffed daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. CT.

Call volumes may be high as the state prepares for new phases of vaccination, so patience is appreciated.

Q. Where can I go to get vaccinated?

A: Vaccination will be led by local health departments, and those 75 and older who are interested in receiving the vaccine should visit the website of their local health department, or call to be notified when clinics begin in their area.

Community clinics with scheduled appointments will be the primary way those 75 and older receive the vaccine. Some doctor's offices and pharmacies may also provide vaccines, but while doses remain limited, the vaccine will be given in a community clinic setting to help ensure all doses can be used in the required timeframe.

Community clinics will stagger appointments to observe social distancing and have space for monitoring after vaccination.

Q. Why is one health department ahead of others in offering the vaccine?

A. Less densely populated areas may have fewer people in Phase 1A groups, so it's likely some local health departments will be ready to start Phase 1B vaccinations sooner.

DHHS is working to distribute the vaccine equitably to all parts of the state.

Q: Are people in large cities receiving the vaccine first? What about rural communities?

A. No. Priority groups are not based on location or community size. Widespread vaccination will be critical to ending the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than 115 sites across Nebraska received initial vaccine shipments, and the DHHS Immunization team is working with local health departments to ensure that ongoing vaccine shipments are distributed equitably.

Q: Are you publishing vaccination data, the way you do for COVID-19 tests and hospitalizations?

A: Yes. The COVID-19 Vaccination Dashboard is available and updated with the number of vaccinations given each day.

The dashboard provides a breakdown of first and second doses given by age, gender, race, and ethnicity. It also reports the percent of the population aged 16 and older completing COVID-19 vaccination. Thus far, COVID-19 vaccines have only been approved for use in those age 16 and older.

The dashboard also includes a general timeline for COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Nebraska, displaying the phases and priority groups as reflected in the state's COVID-19 vaccination plan. The timeline will be updated as recommendations and supplies are made available.

A link to the COVID-19 Vaccination dashboard can be found at the top of the DHHS [COVID-19 Cases Dashboard](#).

Q: How many doses has the state received?

A: By the end of 2020, the state received 86,000 doses targeted for Phase 1A priority groups – health care personnel, and residents and staff off long-term care facilities.



Nebraska is currently receiving about 23,000 first doses a week, along with shipments of second doses.

As more shipments are scheduled and vaccination is completed for Phase 1A priority groups, local health departments will begin offering the vaccine to those 75 and older, followed by other Phase 1B priority groups.

The total number of vaccine doses distributed is available on the COVID-19 Vaccination Dashboard which is updated daily.

Q: Who is administering the vaccine?

A: All those administering the COVID-19 vaccine must have active credentials and be licensed to provide vaccinations.



Providers must also agree to adhere to all vaccine storage and handling requirements and reporting data.

For Phase 1 priority groups, COVID-19 vaccine providers include local health departments, hospitals, federally-qualified health centers, community-based clinics, and tribal health care centers.

As long as vaccine supplies remain limited, doses will continue to be given in a community clinic setting by a limited number of providers. Provider enrollment will expand as supply increases.

December 22, 2020

Q: How did you get ready to begin vaccine distribution?

A: A plan for COVID-19 vaccination was developed this fall and is updated as new information is available from federal regulators and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The first Emergency Use Authorization for Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine was issued on Dec. 11. Nebraska received its first allotment of vaccine doses on Dec. 14, and hospitals began vaccinations the same day. In the first week, more than 8,900 Nebraskans received their first vaccine dose.

Hospitals and facilities capable of storing the vaccine at the necessary temperatures received the first shipments. As additional shipments are scheduled, doses will be distributed via an existing vaccine network that includes local health departments, federally qualified health centers, community-based clinics, and tribal health care centers across the state.

Q: How many doses do you expect to receive?

A: By the end of 2020, the state expects to receive approximately 86,000 doses to administer to health care personnel, as well as residents and staff off long-term care facilities.

As more vaccine doses become available, we will expand our reach to offer the vaccine to other priority groups.

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will continue to update Nebraskans on distribution efforts for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Q: Are you targeting specific groups for vaccination? If so, how?

A: Yes. Nebraska is using a phased approach to COVID-19 vaccination, beginning with frontline health care workers and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel, as well as residents and staff of long-term care (LTC) facilities.

The vaccine supply will be limited for some time and distribution will follow the recommendations of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), which determines priority groups for the U.S. based on data showing the best opportunity to limit infection and to reduce hospitalizations and deaths.





Based on these recommendations, Phase 1 is divided in segments: Phase 1A, 1B and 1C. Nebraska will use an existing vaccine provider network to distribute doses to hospitals, local health departments, federally qualified health centers, community-based clinics, and tribal health care centers across the state.

The CDC is also preparing to launch a partnership with pharmacies to help administer doses to LTC facility residents and staff via on-site vaccine clinics. Nebraska will participate in this partnership to help ensure safe and effective vaccination for this high priority population, and to reduce the burden on health care facilities and local health departments.

A second phase of vaccine distribution for the wider population will begin when large numbers of vaccine doses are available. The CDC hasn't shared a timeline, but current projections are for spring of 2021.

Nebraska's current COVID-19 Phase 1 priority groups are as follows:

Phase 1A

- Health care personnel (hospitals, home health care, pharmacies, EMS, primary care, dental, optometrists, outpatient providers, mental health providers, and public health)
 - The focus is on those providing direct patient care, those who may be exposed to infectious materials, and those unable to work from home
 - Initial doses should not go to administrative staff, staff working remotely, and those not in direct contact with COVID-19 patients or infectious materials
 - All other first responders will be part of Phase 1B
- LTC facility residents and staff (nursing homes, assisted living, independent living, and skilled nursing)

Phase 1B

- Those 75 years of age or older
- Essential critical infrastructure workforce – this can vary by jurisdiction and may be determined by the local health department:
 - First responders – police, fire, other EMS support personnel
 - Education and school services – teachers, paraeducators, janitorial staff, and those with close contact to students who are unable to work remotely
 - Those in the utilities and transportation sectors
 - Food processing/agricultural workers in close contact settings

Phase 1C

- Those 65 to 74 years of age
- Medically vulnerable population – those with medical conditions known to be complicated by COVID-19, including but not limited to:
 - Anyone who has or ever had cancer
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Serious heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
 - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
 - A body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher
 - Type 2 diabetes mellitus



Q: Who is in charge of your distribution effort?

A: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is the lead agency responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The vaccination effort is led by the DHHS Incident Commander, and includes the staff of the DHHS Division of Public Health's Immunization Program.

The Immunization Program team has been working since early 2020 with local health departments and partners across the state to plan for, receive, distribute, and administer a COVID-19 vaccine to Nebraskans.

The effort will scale up to support mass vaccination in Phase 2, which is expected to include a larger network of pharmacies, primary care/doctor's offices and urgent care clinics, as well as other public health venues such as mobile and temporary clinics.

DHHS will continue to update Nebraskans on the distribution efforts for the COVID-19 vaccine.