

# COVID-19 VACCINE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



## KEY MESSAGES

- COVID-19 vaccines will be a critical tool in ending the pandemic. Two of the vaccines, developed by Pfizer and Moderna, indicate greater than 90% efficacy and this is very encouraging news.
- Louisiana is preparing to receive 39,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine the week of December 13, which will be shipped directly to the 5 largest hospital systems in Louisiana; the Louisiana Department of Health will distribute other vaccines to smaller hospitals through our longtime medical logistics partner.
- LDH is following prioritization guidance from the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). The first round of vaccines will be given to frontline healthcare personnel as well as nursing home/long-term-care-facility residents and staff. This includes anyone who works in a healthcare setting, including food service workers and janitorial staff.
- All Louisiana nursing homes have signed onto a partnership between the federal government, CVS and Walgreens that calls for pharmacy workers to administer the vaccine in long-term care facilities. For logistical considerations, the Moderna vaccine will be used in that partnership.
- Moderna's vaccine candidate is the second to seek emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration. The FDA has scheduled a meeting of its Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (or VRBPAC) on December 17. If it gets approval, it will ship shortly afterward.
- The FDA authorization means that trials have proven the vaccine an effective defense against COVID-19. The FDA and ACIP will continue to monitor safety and effectiveness data.
- No steps were skipped during the clinical trials and data review process for COVID-19 vaccines. Safety is a top priority. The COVID vaccines are being held to the same standards as other vaccines to make sure they are safe.
- **The vaccine is likely to become more widely available for the general population in late spring/summer 2021. When this happens, having a large portion of the population vaccinated is our best shot at a return to some form of normalcy.**
- In addition to the vaccines, we will need all of our tools to defeat the pandemic: Handwashing, masks and social distancing. These tools offer the best chance of getting our communities, schools, and health systems back to normal sooner.
- The current vaccines require two doses. We will track immunization through our Louisiana Immunization Network, which has follow-up dose tracking and notification capability. Vaccine recipients will receive

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information cards. Providers will also be financially incentivized to bring patients back for the second dose at the appropriate time.

- Information about vaccine distribution and administration can change quickly. LDH is committed to transparency about the vaccine, including safety concerns, and will continuously educate the public and address questions the public may have.

## VACCINE DEVELOPMENT

- Unlike many vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccine does not contain a dead or a weakened virus that triggers an immune response. Instead, the COVID-19 vaccine contains a genetic instruction manual that tells your immune system how to respond and protect you from exposure to the actual virus.
- The technology used in the vaccines is not new. It is called mRNA, or messenger RNA, and it has been around for decades. This is the first time mRNA has been used in a vaccine, but the effect is the same as other vaccines: Your body gets protection without the serious consequences of a severe illness due to COVID-19 exposure.

## DISTRIBUTION

- Our federal partners have highlighted Louisiana's work on our distribution plan as one of 5 states that did excellent work in developing a distribution plan.
- LDH has been working closely with the private and public sector, including pharmacies, hospitals and nursing homes, in making the vaccine available at locations in both urban and rural communities throughout the state. HHS has also partnered with national pharmacy chains, and expects to partner with independent pharmacies and regional chains to ensure access.
- Louisiana's vaccine distribution plan is designed to ensure that all communities have just and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and information about the vaccine.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- As of now, there is no vaccine for children, though the Pfizer vaccine has been approved for teenagers 16 or older. Until there's a vaccine safely tested for children, there will not be a vaccine for children.
- While we remain in the pandemic the federal government plans to ensure vaccine is made available to those in need without cost to the individual.