

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

for Iowa's Third Congressional District

What's the status of COVID-19 vaccines in Iowa?

In December 2020, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued emergency use authorizations for two COVID-19 vaccines that are now in use. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) determined that both the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna vaccine will help prevent the contraction of COVID-19 and can reduce the risk of becoming seriously ill. Both vaccines are administered in two doses: Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine doses are administered at least 21 days apart; Moderna vaccine doses are administered at least 28 days apart. The federal government is working to purchase, transport and distribute vaccines as quickly as possible to every state, with the goal of ending this pandemic. Each state has been and will continue to be allocated the COVID-19 vaccines using guidance provided by the CDC, which also recommends that vaccinations should be provided first to healthcare workers and residents of long-term care facilities. The state of Iowa is partnering with pharmacies and local public health authorities across the state as part of its effort to effectively distribute vaccines.

We are in anticipation that the one dose vaccine by Johnson & Johnson will be approved for use soon. The vaccine was cleared for emergency use authorization by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on February 24th and more details about when it will be ready for use are expected in the coming days.

Iowa aims to have vaccines available to all Iowans by the summer of 2021.

Who can get a vaccine?

The State of Iowa began to vaccinate those included in Phase 1A, which began in December of 2020. Those eligible for the vaccine in Phase 1A include healthcare personnel as well as residents and staff of long-term care facilities, where older Iowans remain especially vulnerable to the virus. The State of Iowa has identified 72 current and active COVID-19 outbreaks within long-term care facilities, and Iowans 80 years and older have made up over 58% of all COVID-19 deaths in Iowa to date.

Phase 1B began February 1st, 2021. Anyone age 65 and older is eligible to receive a vaccination, as are those who have a high risk of COVID-19 exposure, including: PK-12 school staff, early childhood educators and childcare workers, first responders, essential frontline workers in the food and agriculture sectors, hospital inspectors, some state officials, as well as adults living or working in a congregate living setting (excluding college dormitories). More information about who is included in Phase 1B can be found at <https://idph.iowa.gov>

Phase 1C will include the general public but future details have not yet been released.

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How can you sign up?

Each of Iowa's 99 county public health departments is handling the vaccine distribution differently. To sign up to receive the vaccine, or for more information about resources where you live, please visit your county's public health website and/or find its contact information below:

1. Polk County: 515-286-3798
2. Dallas County: 515-993-3750
3. Pottawattamie County: 712-242-1155
4. Adair County: 641-743-6173
5. Adams County: 641-322-6283
6. Cass County: 712-243-7552
7. Fremont County: 712-374-2685
8. Guthrie County: 641-747-3972
9. Mills County: 712-527-9699
10. Madison County: 515-462-9051
11. Montgomery County: 712-623-4893
12. Page County: 712-850-1212
13. Ringgold County: 641-464-0691
14. Taylor County: 712-523-3405
15. Union County: 641-782-3545
16. Warren County: 515-961-1074

You may also need to bring: A photo ID and proof of residency. (Note: Phase 1A Critical and Health Care Workers may also need to show photo ID and proof of employment).

Is the vaccine safe?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccination works by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19, and this prevents you from getting sick with COVID-19. None of the authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines (or COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States) contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19. Some report feeling under the weather for 24 hours or having soreness after receiving the vaccine, but these are normal side effects. A small percentage of people who receive the vaccine may have an allergic reaction, which is why there is a required waiting period of 15 to 30 minutes after you receive your vaccine where you are monitored in case of allergic reaction.

COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. Messenger RNA vaccines—also called “mRNA vaccines”—are the COVID-19 vaccines authorized in the United States. mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response. The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is located. This means the mRNA cannot affect or interact with our DNA in any way. Instead, COVID-19 mRNA vaccines work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease.

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Is there a vaccine shortage?

Unfortunately, due to national shortages and a lack of preparation by the federal government to purchase enough vaccines, the transition to Phase 1B on February 1 does not mean there will be enough vaccine immediately available to vaccinate every eligible person. You may need to sign up in advance to receive a vaccine.

Who can I talk to if I have more questions about COVID-19 and/or vaccines?

If you have general questions about the vaccine, please call the Iowa Department of Public Health Hotline by dialing 2-1-1. Resource specialists are available 24 hours a day to answer basic questions. However, always check with your healthcare provider first regarding questions specific to your personal health situation.

New information about COVID-19 vaccinations and related public health guidance is always forthcoming, and some of the details above may change. Our office will provide you with the most up-to-date information as it becomes available.