



Montana Health Alert Network

Categories of Health Alert Messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Information Service: passes along low level priority messages that do not fit other HAN categories and are for informational purposes only.

DPHHS Subject Matter Resource for more information regarding this HAN, contact:

Immunization Section
1-406-444-5580

For technical issues related to the HAN message contact the Emergency Preparedness Section at 1-406-444-0919

DPHHS Health Alert Hotline:
1-800-701-5769

DPHHS HAN Website:
www.han.mt.gov

DPHHS HAN Information Sheet



DATE

January 6, 2021

SUBJECT

Update to Implementation of COVID-19 Vaccination in Montana

BACKGROUND

As of January 5th, 2021, Montana has received approximately 36,000 initial doses of COVID-19 vaccine for distribution and administration by 107 enrolled providers. To date, approximately 25,000 initial doses (63%) have been administered to individuals identified at highest risk. These populations include individuals identified as Phase 1A recipients, front-line medical workers, health care providers with direct patient contact and staff and residents of Long-term Care (LTC) and Assisted Living Facilities (ALF).

Efforts to vaccinate LTC and ALF settings began 12/28 and vaccination efforts have been initiated in approximately 25 facilities. State consultations with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and federal contractors carrying out this effort have provided the following additional information:

Facilities aligned with CVS and Walgreens that have not already started to have vaccine administered are expected to have initial doses started no later than January 18 and 24 respectively. Additional providers will be assisting in this effort and the state Immunization program is closely monitoring this activity. Updates as new information is received will be provide via HAN messages and state websites.

Additional information tracking Montana's efforts will be available at the DPHHS website at:

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/>

and at CDC's vaccine tracking site at:

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations>

Detailed recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) related to the allocation and use of COVID- 19 vaccines for phases 1 and 2 can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/covid-19.html>

INFORMATION

After review of recent COVID-19 activity, hospitalizations and deaths and vaccination resources, the state of Montana will be prioritizing vaccine delivery to those most at risk of severe complications related to COVID-19. The table below reflects updates to our December 24, 2020 HAN message and prioritizes vaccine delivery to individuals 70 years of age and above and individuals with underlying medical conditions placing them at high-risk of complications related to COVID-19 infection.

Timelines may be updated as needed to reflect any changes in recommendations or vaccine supplies. Timelines reflect when most of the vaccination for the specific phase are anticipated to be given; however, we anticipate additional doses will be administered as needed to complete each phase.



Phase 1

Phase 1A Recipients (No Change)

- Frontline healthcare workers
- Long-term Care and Assisted Living Facilities (LTC/ALF)
- Healthcare workers with direct patient contact or virus exposure

Phase 1B Recipients

- Persons aged 70 years and older
- American Indians and other people of color who may be at elevated risk for COVID-19 complications
- Persons aged 16-69 with high-risk medical conditions. Qualifying medical conditions include:
 - Cancer
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
 - Down Syndrome
 - Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
 - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
 - Severe Obesity (BMI \geq 40 kg/m²)
 - Sickle cell disease
 - Type 1 & 2 Diabetes mellitus
 - On a case by case basis, medical providers may include individuals with other conditions that place them at elevated risk for COVID-19 related complications.

Phase 1C Recipients

- Frontline Essential Workers
- Persons aged 60 years and older
- Individuals residing in congregate care and correctional facilities
- Persons aged 16-59 with medical conditions not included in phase 1B that may have an elevated-risk of COVID-19 complications, conditions include:
 - Asthma (moderate-to-severe)
 - Cerebrovascular disease (affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain)
 - Cystic fibrosis
 - Hypertension or high blood pressure
 - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines
 - Neurologic conditions, such as dementia
 - Liver disease
 - Overweight (BMI > 25 kg/m², but < 40 kg/m²)
 - Pulmonary fibrosis (having damaged or scarred lung tissues)
 - Thalassemia (a type of blood disorder)

Phase 2 Recipients

- All remaining Montanans aged 16 or older



RECOMMENDATIONS

Health Care Providers

All providers with direct patient contact are eligible to receive vaccine as local supplies allow. Most jurisdictions have completed vaccination of highest-risk health care staff and are vaccinating other providers with patient contact as supplies allow.

If not already aware, we recommend consulting with your local public health partners or the hospital in your community to determine what health care providers are currently able to receive vaccine. Additional vaccine has been allocated to health care providers with direct patient contact to complete Phase 1A.

Public Health Departments

Continue to work with vaccine providers in the community to monitor vaccine supplies and local efforts to complete Phase 1A. Planning for Phases 1B and 1C, broadening target groups, should continue to be emphasized as the demand for information is very high and public messaging is encouraged.

Messaging to the public regarding the initiation of 1B will need to be clear that vaccine supplies are limited and may not be immediately available to all who may qualify. If not already in place, public health agencies and partners are encouraged to work closely and consider joint messaging and methods to schedule patients as needed.

We will be updating messaging from DPHHS weekly with respect to vaccine supplies, target groups and uptake of vaccine.

Please share this HAN and the attached schedule with relevant partners and the general public at your discretion.



MONTANA COVID-19 VACCINE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why is the State of Montana updating their recommendations?

A: After review of recent COVID-19 activity, hospitalizations and deaths and vaccination resources, the state of Montana will be prioritizing vaccine delivery to those most at risk of severe complications related to COVID-19.

Q: When can I get vaccinated?

A: Please refer to the up to date information at dphhs.mt.gov for information on the availability of vaccine and current target groups. Based on vaccine supplies, it is anticipated that expansion of vaccination to individuals aged 70 and over or who are at high-risk (Phase 1B) will begin in mid-January. This approximate timeline is subject to change, as doses will be extremely limited. Individuals will need to monitor messaging from local public health authorities and local medical providers regarding supply in their area. This phase will likely take several months to complete as additional vaccine becomes available, so not everyone who is eligible will be vaccinated on day 1 of Phase 1B.

Q: How do I know if I am high risk due to an underlying medical condition?

A: Please refer to the guidance available at dphhs.mt.gov for information on the target populations and medical conditions related to increased risk from COVID-19.

Q: Where can I be vaccinated?

A: Vaccination sites vary by county or jurisdiction. Enrolled vaccine providers include local health departments, hospitals, community health centers, IHS and tribal health, and pharmacies. We recommend monitoring messaging from local public health authorities and local medical providers regarding supply in your area. As vaccine becomes available outside of targeted medical providers currently being vaccinated, information on vaccine availability will be available at the dphhs.mt.gov website as well as most local health department web sites.

Q: Which vaccine will I get?

A: *If you are 16-18 years old*, you will receive the Pfizer vaccine as it is the only vaccine approved for persons under 18 at this time. *If you are 18 years old and over*, the vaccine you receive will depend on the allocation on hand of the provider who is responsible for your vaccine administration.

Q: How do the vaccines work?

A: mRNA vaccines are a new type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. To trigger an immune response, many vaccines put a weakened or inactivated germ into our bodies. Not mRNA vaccines. Instead, they teach our cells how to make a protein—or even just a piece of a protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies. Please visit the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) website for more information.

Q: Are the vaccines safe?

A: The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Learn how federal partners are working together to [ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines](#).

Q: How far along is the state in the vaccination progress?

A: While the state remains in vaccination Phase 1A, which includes patient-facing healthcare providers along with staff and residents of long-term care facilities, some communities may be ready to initiate vaccination Phase 1B.

Q: Who will let me know when I need my second dose?

A: When you receive your first dose, you will be given a vaccination card showing the type of vaccine you received and the date of your second scheduled dose. You may also receive an electronic notification from the facility's Electronic Health Record (EHR) when the second dose is available.

