



State of Utah

SPENCER J. COX
Governor

DEIDRE M. HENDERSON
Lieutenant Governor

**Utah Department of Health
Executive Director's Office**

Richard G. Saunders
Executive Director

Heather R. Borski, M.P.H., M.C.H.E.S.
Deputy Director

Michelle G. Hofmann M.D., M.P.H., M.H.C.D.S., F.A.A.P.
Deputy Director

February 9, 2021

Dear colleagues,

Governor Cox recently announced who will be eligible next for the COVID-19 vaccine. However, even if your patients fall into one of these groups that is next in line to get vaccinated, they need to wait to schedule an appointment. Appointments for the next groups will not be able to be scheduled until the end of February. Right now, local health departments need to stay focused on vaccinating people older than 70. Trying to contact local health departments right now takes their resources away from getting people vaccinated and could slow down the process.

Starting March 1, 2021, people between the ages of 65-69 and Utahns 18 or older with any of the following medical conditions will be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine:

- Severe or uncontrolled chronic conditions, specifically:
 - Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40 or higher (this is also called Class III or severe obesity)
 - Chronic liver disease including chronic hepatitis B or C, alcohol-related liver disease, primary biliary cirrhosis, or primary sclerosing cholangitis or hemochromatosis
 - Severe chronic heart disease (other than hypertension) including ischemic heart disease, and severe valve or congenital heart disease"
 - Severe chronic kidney disease (requiring dialysis, or stage 4 or 5 kidney disease)
 - Severe chronic respiratory disease (other than asthma) including severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, fibrosing lung disease, bronchiectasis, or cystic fibrosis
 - Uncontrolled diabetes with an A1c of 9.0% or higher
- Severe conditions that impair the immune and/or respiratory system, specifically:
 - Asplenia including splenectomy or spleen dysfunction
 - Sickle cell disease
 - Hematologic cancer diagnosed within the last 5 years that began in the blood, bone marrow, or cells in the immune system (such as leukemia, lymphoma, and multiple myeloma)
 - Non-hematologic cancer diagnosed within last 1 year that didn't begin in the blood or bone marrow (excluding basal and squamous cell cancer diagnoses)
 - Immunocompromised state from blood, bone marrow, or organ transplant; HIV; long-term use of corticosteroids or other medicines that weaken the immune system
 - Receiving immunosuppression therapy
 - Solid organ transplant recipient
 - Neurologic conditions that impair respiratory function, including cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, epilepsy, motor neuron disease, multiple sclerosis, myasthenia



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- gravis, Parkinson's disease, progressive cerebellar disease, and quadriplegia or hemiplegia
- Stroke or dementia (Alzheimer's, vascular, or frontotemporal)

Patients DON'T need to get a doctor's note to schedule their vaccine. COVID-19 vaccine providers will rely on individuals being honest. **Patients who do not meet these criteria need to wait until those at highest risk have been vaccinated.** We used data from national and international studies, as well as our own Utah data, to determine which conditions are at highest risk for developing severe COVID-19 disease. We recognize there are conditions outside of this list that are at high risk as well; however, we only have enough vaccines for those included here.

We would appreciate your help to make sure your patients get vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available to them.

Patients will need to:

- **Call or visit their [local health department](#) website to schedule an appointment.** Patients must have an appointment. Please understand we have limited vaccines and appointments will fill up quickly. It may take a few tries to get an appointment. Local health departments may also be able to help patients who need accommodations, like transportation or language services.
- Some vaccines require a 2nd dose of the vaccine a few weeks later. The vaccine provider will tell them when to come back for their 2nd shot, depending on which vaccine they received. All FDA approved COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing disease.
- Call your office if he or she has any side effects after getting the vaccine. If you, or your patient, think he or she may have had an adverse reaction, you can call 1-800-822-7967 or email VAERS at info@VAERS.org. You may also call the Utah Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 with questions.

We expect additional vaccination sites to open up in the coming weeks including at retail pharmacies (Smith's and Walmart) and large mass vaccination clinics provided by health systems or hospitals. Updates on these locations will be posted at coronavirus.utah.gov/vaccine.

Some patients may be concerned about vaccine safety. Data from clinical trials showed all FDA approved COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. **The benefits of getting vaccinated far outweigh the risks of getting COVID-19.** Of those who reported side effects, most had normal, mild to moderate symptoms that showed up within the first 7 days after getting the vaccine. No steps were skipped during the clinical trial and data review process. Safety is a top priority.



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We encourage you to visit coronavirus.utah.gov/vaccine for more information. On the website, you and your patients can sign up to receive a [newsletter](#) with current and updated vaccine information. Both the website and newsletter are also available in Spanish at <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/vacunas>.

In addition, we have videos, flyers, graphics, and FAQs in several languages that could be helpful for your patients at <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/vaccine-education-resources/>. You, or your patients, may also call our COVID-19 Hotline at 1-800-456-7707 with questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela C. Dunn".

Dr. Angela C. Dunn, MD, MPH
State Epidemiologist
Utah Department of Health