



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO
Lieutenant Governor

MARYLOU SUDDERS
Secretary

MONICA BHAREL, MD, MPH
Commissioner

Tel: 617-624-6000
www.mass.gov/dph

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Dear Community Leaders, Faith Leaders, and Mission-Driven Organizations,

Thank you for your patience as the state contends with an extremely constrained vaccine supply from the federal government.

We know that both you and the people and communities you work with are eager for information on when vaccine will be available and how best to access it. Currently, groups eligible for vaccination include individuals in Phase 1 (this includes health care workers, home-based health care workers, first responders, staff and residents of congregate care settings, and staff and residents of long-term care facilities), individuals age 75 or older, and companions accompanying an individual age 75 or older to the Fenway, Gillette, Doubletree Danvers, or Eastfield Mall Springfield vaccination sites.

Effective tomorrow, February 18, 2021, the following individuals will be eligible to receive the vaccine: Those aged 65 or older, individuals living in low income or affordable senior housing, and individuals aged 16 or older with two or more of the health conditions or factors that increase risk of severe illness from COVID-19, listed below:

- [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](#)
(NOTE: For this group, this does not include individuals who are immunocompromised due to other conditions, such as blood or bone marrow transplant or HIV)
- [Obesity and severe obesity \(body mass index \[BMI\] of 30 kg/m2 or higher\)](#)
- [Pregnancy](#)
- [Sickle cell disease](#)
- [Smoking](#)
- [Type 2 diabetes mellitus](#)
- [Asthma \(moderate-to-severe\)](#)

Individuals will not need a doctor's note or other documentation to show they have two or more of the above conditions.

To support our collective vaccination efforts, we are requesting your help in:

1. **Promoting who is now eligible** to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and encouraging them to make an appointment at a vaccination site. Vaccination sites can be found at vaxfinder.mass.gov. These sites include:
 - **Mass vaccination sites**, such as Gillette Stadium, Fenway Park, the Eastfield Mall in Springfield, the DoubleTree Hilton Hotel in Danvers, the Reggie Lewis Center in Roxbury, and others. These sites currently have the most availability for appointments;
 - Regional **vaccine clinics** operated by a local board of health; and
 - **105 local pharmacies** and retail locations administering the vaccine.
2. **Setting expectations** by indicating it may take weeks to get an appointment;
3. If your organization is able to, assisting people **with making an appointment at a vaccination site and arranging transportation** as necessary.
4. **Educating and engaging your community** about the safety, efficacy and importance of getting the vaccine. Your participation is critical to provide people with clear, accurate, consistent information about the vaccine, building trust and vaccine confidence, and dispelling vaccine misinformation.
 - Please visit [Stop COVID-19 – Vaccine education and outreach materials | Mass.gov](#) for a toolkit of materials in multiple languages to use when conducting outreach/education with your community with whom.
 - We recognize that historical and current structural racism and oppression has made it difficult for some communities (such as Black people and people with disabilities) to fully trust the public health, medical and scientific community. We want to be open and honest about the safety and development of the COVID-19 vaccine—what we know and what we don't know. These materials provide a foundation to have these conversations but do not address all the unique and valid needs and concerns of different populations and communities. We encourage you to tailor the language and format in a way that is most relevant and resonant for the people with whom you work.

We know many of your constituents have questions. While vaccine supply remains significantly limited, we ask you to please help set expectations around vaccine timing and to help them navigate the process. Some suggested messages are below.

Massachusetts recently announced that, as of February 18, the following individuals can receive vaccine:

- Individuals aged 65 and older
- Health care workers
- Home-based health care workers
- First responders
- Staff or residents of congregate care settings
- Staff or residents of long-term care facilities
- Individuals aged 16 or older with **two or more** of the health conditions or factors that increase risk of severe illness from COVID-19 listed below:
 - o [Cancer](#)
 - o [Chronic kidney disease](#)
 - o [COPD \(chronic obstructive pulmonary disease\)](#)
 - o [Down Syndrome](#)
 - o [Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies](#)
 - o [Immunocompromised state \(weakened immune system\) from solid organ transplant](#) (**NOTE:** For this group, this does not include individuals who are immunocompromised due to other conditions, such as blood or bone marrow transplant or HIV)
 - o [Obesity and severe obesity \(body mass index \[BMI\] of 30 kg/m² or higher\)](#)
 - o [Pregnancy](#) (**NOTE:** If you are pregnant or breastfeeding and have questions around getting vaccinated, a discussion with your healthcare provider might help you make an informed decision. Learn more about [vaccine safety and pregnancy.](#))
 - o [Sickle cell disease](#)
 - o [Smoking](#)
 - o [Type 2 diabetes mellitus](#)
 - o [Asthma \(moderate-to-severe\)](#)

The vaccine will be given to you at no cost, even if you are uninsured or undocumented. You do not have to pay any co-pays or fees. **You will not need a doctor's note or other documentation to show you have two or more of the above conditions.**

The COVID-19 vaccines are safe. Vaccines undergo rigorous testing and large clinical trials with diverse participants before they are approved for widespread use. Getting a vaccine is the best way to protect yourself from COVID-19 and may also help protect loved ones who are not yet vaccinated. For more on vaccine safety, visit mass.gov/covidvaccinesafety

Supply of vaccine in Massachusetts is currently very limited. If you are currently eligible to receive vaccine, we can assist you in scheduling an appointment. Your healthcare provider may also contact you with additional information or to make a vaccination appointment. There is a growing number of locations providing vaccinations to those who are eligible for vaccine. Vaccination sites can be found at vaxfinder.mass.gov, these sites include:

- **Mass vaccination sites**, such as Gillette Stadium, Fenway Park, the Eastfield Mall in Springfield, the DoubleTree Hilton Hotel in Danvers, the Reggie Lewis Center in Roxbury, and others. These sites currently have the most availability for appointments;
- Regional **vaccine clinics** operated by a local board of health; and
- **105 local pharmacies** and retail locations administering the vaccine.

Due to limited vaccine supply, available appointments are limited at this time. Please be patient. Appointments will be added as more vaccine becomes available.

What to expect if you aren't currently eligible for vaccine

If you do not qualify for vaccine at this time, **there are no steps for you to take right now and you do not need to call your doctor's office.** Please visit mass.gov/vaccine to learn more about the phases and to find additional information about the COVID-19 vaccine.