



Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Asa Hutchinson
José R. Romero, MD, Secretary of Health

Update: December 30, 2020

Dear Health Care Worker,

You are receiving this letter, because you are a health care worker in the medical or dental field. By that we mean that you work for a health care organization, such as a hospital, clinic, or pharmacy, that provides health care to residents in Arkansas—even though you may not be a health professional. The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) wants you to know that we have now received initial shipments of both Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and Moderna vaccine in our state. The initial shipments will not be enough to vaccinate everyone. So, we have established three priority groups: Phase 1-A, 1-B, and 1-C. Health care workers are in 1-A, which is the highest priority group. This is because many health care workers are at high risk for exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19 infection.

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was the first one available in the U.S. It is given as a two-dose series at least 21 days apart in the deltoid muscle. At this time, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will only be given to people 16 years of age and older. A second vaccine made by Moderna is now authorized and initial shipments to Arkansas have been received. The Moderna vaccine will be given intramuscularly (IM) as a two-dose series at least 28 days apart. It is authorized for those 18 years of age and older. These vaccines are not interchangeable. The second dose must be the same vaccine as the first dose. For more information about these and other COVID-19 vaccines, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>. Please note that when vaccine doses are shipped to Arkansas for the first dose, an allocation for the second dose is reserved for us by our federal partners. Second-dose allocations will be shipped to Arkansas at the right interval to allow you to get your second dose on schedule.

The State of Arkansas does not require COVID-19 vaccination. If you choose to be vaccinated, it will be provided to you with no out-of-pocket cost. The U.S. government is providing the vaccine to all states at no cost, including Arkansas. So, the cost of the vaccine will not be billed. However, the vaccine provider will bill your insurance for the vaccine administration fee to cover their cost for giving the vaccine to you. If you have no health insurance, you will not be billed for the administration fee.

COVID-19 vaccinations will be provided to you in one of three ways:

- If you work in a hospital you will receive your vaccine through your hospital. Hospitals have begun vaccinating those working at their facilities over the last 2 weeks. The initial shipments of vaccine will not be enough to vaccinate all hospital employees and staff at once. Therefore, hospitals have been asked to vaccinate those workers at highest risk first. If you have not been vaccinated already, please ask your supervisor when it will be your turn to get vaccinated.
- If you work in a clinic, pharmacy, or any other health care organization, you will receive your vaccination through certain pharmacies around the state. To assist with Phase 1-A, 140 pharmacies in counties around the state have agreed to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and Moderna vaccine when it is available (The initial allocation of the Moderna vaccine will go to residents and health care workers in long-term care facilities before it is available in pharmacies). In Newton County the ADH local health unit (LHU) will be providing vaccinations to health care workers. In Searcy County, the Boston Mountain Rural Health Center will be vaccinating health care workers. Woodruff County vaccinations will be through ARCare. For a list of Phase 1-A pharmacies in other counties, visit

<https://bitly.com/ARvaccine>. We anticipate that limited doses of vaccine will be available in these pharmacies in early January 2021. Due to this limited supply, and now that vaccination at hospitals is well underway, the next priority groups are community-based health care workers in the following settings:

- Primary Care
- Urgent Care
- University Health Center Workers
- School Nurses and Health aides: K-12
- Dental Clinics
- Pharmacy
- Home Health, Private Care / Personal Care, Hospice
- Dialysis Centers
- Blood Donation Centers
- EMS: patient transport health workers, paramedics, EMTs

Workers in these priority groups can begin now to coordinate with a pharmacy (see above) in their county to make plans for vaccination. Other health care workers not in these groups will start vaccination later in January.

To be vaccinated during Phase 1-A, you will need to select the most convenient pharmacy (or other site if you are in Newton, Searcy, or Woodruff Countys) and contact them after January 1 to learn about when they will be offering COVID-19 vaccinations. You will also need to bring your insurance card and a work badge or a letter on official letterhead to show that you work in health care. We encourage clinics to designate a single person to call on behalf of the entire clinic in order to reduce the number of calls to the pharmacy. Since there will not be enough vaccine available at first to vaccinate all health care workers, we are asking those workers not providing direct care to patients to wait until after February 1, 2021 to get vaccinated.

- If you work in a long-term care (LTC) facility, you will receive your COVID-19 vaccination through a LTC pharmacy that is providing vaccinations to the residents of the facility during Phase 1-A. The LTC pharmacy will work closely with your facility to plan and communicate to you the date and time of their visit. By LTC facility, we mean nursing home, assisted living, or other intermediate care facility. If you are not able to be vaccinated at the LTC facility where you work, you may also be vaccinated at a community pharmacy participating on Phase 1-A, as described above.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to offer you my sincere thanks for your hard work and your dedication to the patients you have served—whether directly or indirectly—throughout the course of this pandemic. One day we will be on the other side of this pandemic, but we are not there yet. Rather, we still have a ways to go. It is my hope that safe and effective COVID-19 vaccination will help us get there much faster.

If you have questions or need further information please contact us through the ADH COVID-19 Call Center at 1-800-803-7847 or email us at ADH.CoronaVirus@Arkansas.gov.

Sincerely,

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