



DEEPER DIVE: Phase 1b. Adults at highest risk of severe illness and those at highest risk for exposure

COVID-19 Vaccinations: Your best shot at stopping COVID-19

A tested, safe and effective vaccine will be available to all who want it, but supplies will be limited at first. To save lives and slow the spread of COVID-19, independent state and federal public health advisory committees recommend first protecting health care workers caring for patients with COVID-19, people who are at the highest risk of being hospitalized or dying, and those at high risk of exposure to COVID-19. Keep practicing the 3 W's—wear a mask, wait six feet apart, wash your hands—until everyone has a chance to get vaccinated.

Phase 1b: The goals are to save lives by protecting North Carolinians who are at high risk of being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19 and slow the spread by protecting those at high risk of exposure.

Due to limited supply, phase 1b will not be open to everyone at first. Vaccinations will happen by group in the following order:

- **Group 1: Persons 75 years and older:** All people age 75 and older will be eligible to be vaccinated first in this group. There is no requirement to have certain qualifying chronic conditions.
- **Group 2: Any patient facing direct health care workers not vaccinated in Phase 1a and essential frontline workers and over age 50:** Patient facing direct health care workers are those directly caring for or working directly in areas where in-person patient care occurs. Essential frontline workers are defined by the CDC as workers who are in sectors essential to the functioning of society and who are substantially higher risk for exposure to COVID-19. There is no requirement to have certain qualifying chronic conditions.
- **Group 3: All other patient facing direct health care workers not vaccinated in Phase 1a and frontline essential workers of any age.** There is no requirement to have certain qualifying chronic conditions.

Patient facing direct health care workers includes any paid or unpaid health care workers with direct patient contact including, but not limited to:

- behavioral health providers
- community health workers
- dental hygienists
- dentists
- EMT/paramedics
- environmental services staff
- food services staff
- health care trainees (e.g., medical students, pharmacy students, nursing students)
- home health workers
- laboratory and phlebotomy staff
- nurses
- nursing aides and assistants
- nursing techs
- front desk administrative staff
- personal care aides
- Pharmacists
- Pharmacy techs
- physicians
- public health and emergency preparedness workers
- public health nurses
- respiratory techs

Frontline essential workers as defined by the [CDC](#) include these jobs:

- First responders (firefighters, police)
- Education (teachers, support staff, day care)
- Manufacturing
- Corrections workers
- Public transit workers
- Grocery store workers
- Food and agriculture
- US postal workers

North Carolina revised the prioritization for who qualifies for vaccination in Phase 1b from its original plan submitted to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in October 2020 to more closely align with [new recommendations from the CDC](#) on vaccine allocation published on December 22, 2020.