



Vaccine FAQ for People with High-Risk Medical Conditions or Disabilities

Introduction

Healthcare providers can use their clinical judgment to vaccinate people between the ages of 16-64 who are believed to be at the very highest risk for morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 as a direct result of one or more severe health conditions. More information on this can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/3cQia3W>. The list of highest risk medical conditions and disabilities is subject to change as new clinical data becomes available.

If you are a healthcare provider seeking information about vaccination for people with high-risk medical conditions or disabilities, please visit our Provider Guidance page at <https://covid-19.acgov.org/provider-guidance.page> and look under Training and Education Materials.

Below are answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about COVID-19 vaccination for people with high-risk medical conditions or disabilities.

1. Who is eligible?

As of March 15, 2021, people between the ages of 16-65 with high-risk medical conditions or disabilities are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

The lists below include examples of high-risk medical conditions that make you eligible. If your condition is not listed and you believe you are high-risk, talk with your doctor and they will let you know if you qualify.

Examples of high-risk medical conditions:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic pulmonary disease
- Down syndrome
- An organ transplant that has led to a weaker immune system
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
- Severe obesity
- Type 2 diabetes



People also qualify for vaccination if they have a developmental or other high-risk disability that would result in one or more of the following:

- A COVID-19 infection would likely result in life-threatening illness or death.
- A COVID-19 infection will limit the ability to receive needed ongoing care or essential services.
- The person’s disability would make providing appropriate COVID-19 care challenging.

People who receive services from the following programs are also eligible:

- Regional Center of the East Bay (RCEB)
- Independent Living Center
- In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)
- Community Based Adult Services (CBAS)
- Adult Day Health Centers (ADHC)
- Medi-Cal HIV/AIDS Waiver
- Medi-Cal Home and Community-Based Alternatives Waiver
- Medi-Cal Assisted Living Waiver
- California Children’s Services (CCS) Program
- California Genetically Handicapped Persons Program (GHPP)

2. Will you be asked to verify your disability or health condition?

No. When you arrive for your appointment, you will not be asked to share your disability or health condition.

You are not required to bring documentation about your disability or health condition to your appointment.

Before you can receive the vaccine, you will be asked to verify that you have a high-risk health condition or disability. This is called “self-attestation.”

When you sign-up for your vaccine appointment online or on the phone, you will be asked to do a self-attestation. You will be prompted to answer “yes” or “no” to the question, “Do you believe you are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 due to an underlying health condition?”

If you do not make a vaccination appointment in advance, you will self-attest in person at the vaccine site before you receive the vaccine. If you have any trouble completing the self-attestation, someone will be able to help you.



3. Do I need to bring a verification letter to my vaccination appointment?

No. You do not need to bring an attestation letter to your vaccination appointment.

If you already have an attestation letter, you may bring it with you. You will not be asked to show the letter to any staff at the vaccination site.

4. Which vaccine is right for me?

For most people, the best vaccine is the first one that is available to them. There are currently three vaccines available. The Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines are all safe and effective and authorized by the FDA. People who are 16-17 years old can only receive the Pfizer vaccine.

We recommend that you discuss any concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines with your doctor.\

5. Is there a vaccine with fewer side effects?

The vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19. However, some side effects are common. They are normal signs that your body is building protection against the virus.

Common vaccine side effects include:

- Pain, redness, and swelling on the arm where you got the shot
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Nausea

These side effects can be unpleasant, but generally go away after a few days. Some people have no side effects at all.

Talk to your doctor about taking over-the-counter medication, like Ibuprofen, acetaminophen, aspirin, or antihistamines for any pain and discomfort you may experience after vaccination. You can take these over-the-counter medications after vaccination to relieve post-vaccination side effects if you have no medical reasons not to take them.

We recommend you ask your doctor if it's safe for you to take these over-the-counter medications after vaccination to reduce your symptoms. We do not recommend taking these medications before vaccination.

You can also relieve pain and discomfort from the vaccine by:



- Applying a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area where you got the shot
- Using or exercising your arm
- Drinking plenty of fluids and dressing lightly to reduce fever discomfort

For more information on this review the CDC’s description on possible side effects and how to relieve them at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/expect/after.html>.

6. Is it easier for me to get a vaccine with one shot?

Currently, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine (also known as the Janssen vaccine) is the only available COVID-19 vaccine that requires just one shot.

For some people, getting a one-shot vaccine like Johnson & Johnson may be easier. This may be true if your mobility is limited and/or if getting to the vaccination site is challenging. For others, getting a two-shot vaccine like Moderna or Pfizer will not be a challenge.

The good news is that the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine is highly effective, safe, and can be a good alternative for people who cannot easily make a second vaccination appointment. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is approved only for people who are 18 and older. Pfizer is the only vaccine that is currently approved for people who are 16 and older.

Right now, there is not enough vaccine for everyone. This means you may not be able to choose which vaccine you get at a site. When you make your appointment, you will be told which vaccine is being offered so you can make an informed decision.

7. How do I sign up for a vaccine when there are so many different places to receive it?

We recommend that you get the vaccine from whoever can give it to you first. You can get the vaccine through the state, Alameda County, your healthcare provider, a pharmacy, or a vaccine pop-up site.

Please visit the vaccine availability section of our website at <https://covid-19.acgov.org/vaccines> to learn about eligibility and how to make an appointment.

Sign-up for vaccine notification with the state at My Turn at <https://myturn.ca.gov/>.

Contact your health insurance plan, doctor, or pharmacy to find out how to receive the vaccine through those channels.

Alameda County: To sign-up for vaccination with Alameda County, visit our vaccine website at <https://covid-19.acgov.org/vaccines> and click “Get notified when it’s your turn” under **Alameda County Residents**.

- Fill out the Alameda County Resident Vaccine Notification Form.



Public Health Department: Main Line (510) 267-8000

COVID-19 Information: (510) 268-2101

- Be sure to answer **YES** to the question that asks if you “believe you are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 due to an underlying health condition.”
- If you need help completing the form, call **510-208-4829** and someone will help you sign-up for vaccination with the county.

UCSF-Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland is now giving the Pfizer vaccine to people between the ages of 16-21.

- To schedule a vaccine appointment with Children’s Hospital, call the UCSF COVID vaccine scheduling hotline at 415-514-1196 and when prompted press option 2. Although option 2 indicates it is for UCSF patients only, you should still press option 2 even if you are not a UCSF patient.
- After you press option 2, a recorded message will state that UCSF does not currently have vaccine for 1st doses and that the caller should stay on the line to speak to a representative. **Please stay on the line and tell the operator that you are calling to schedule a vaccine appointment at Children’s Hospital Oakland for a 16- or 17-year-old who is medically eligible.**

8. Are the county-run vaccine sites accessible for people with disabilities?

Yes. The county has two vaccine sites that are ADA accessible (walk-in, not drive thru):

- Fremont High School, between High Street & Ygnacio Avenue, Oakland, CA 94601
- Hayward Adult School Gym, between Princeton Street & Sunset Blvd, Hayward, CA 94541

Please visit the vaccine availability section of our website at <https://covid-19.acgov.org/vaccines.page?#availability> for hours of operation.

If standing in line is difficult or causes you discomfort, talk to a vaccine site staff member and ask to sit near the front of the vaccine appointment line. The vaccination team may be able to vaccinate you in your car. If you require any accommodations at a vaccine site, do not hesitate to ask. All sites have multi-language services.

9. How can I get to an appointment if I have mobility challenges?

If you have challenges with mobility or cannot take public transportation, please reach out to the resources listed on the paratransit support vaccine access section of our website at <https://covid-19.acgov.org/vaccines#paratransit>. Paratransit is a specialized transportation



service for persons who cannot use regular buses, streetcars, or BART due to disability or a health-related condition.

MediCal managed care plans like the Alameda Alliance for Health (AAH) and Anthem Blue Cross, as well as some other health insurance and managed care plans, can also provide transportation services. We recommend that you contact your health insurance or managed care plan for more information about this.

California Children’s Services (CCS) can provide transportation for CCS enrolled children and youth who are not enrolled in Medi-Cal managed care or are unable to obtain transportation through their managed care plan. For further information about CCS transportation services, please call 510-208-5970 and ask to speak with Michelle Theus, the Alameda County CCS transportation specialist.

Paratransit services are available to those receiving vaccination at the Oakland Coliseum. Please visit the East Bay Paratransit website at <https://www.eastbayparatransit.org/news-and-alerts.htm> for more information.

10. Can I receive the vaccine at home?

We are working on this. At this time, you cannot receive vaccination at home, but there are plans for this option to be available in the future for those who are homebound or unable to get to a vaccine site. If you are unable to leave your home due to mobility challenges or illness, you can indicate that you require a vaccination in your home by selecting “yes” on the Alameda County Vaccination notification form.