DEEPER DIVE

Group 4 – Adults at High Risk for Exposure and Increased Risk of Severe Illness

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. Our goal is to vaccinate as many people as possible given the limited supply of vaccines.

Keep practicing the 3 Ws— wear a mask, wait six feet apart, wash your hands—until everyone has a chance to get vaccinated.

Group 4: The goal is to protect those at increased risk of being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19, those at increased risk of exposure and those in essential roles during the pandemic.

Group 4 includes anyone 16-64 years old with one or more high-risk medical conditions for severe disease from COVID-19, people living in close group settings and essential workers. (Please note these are different from Group 3 frontline essential workers.)

PEOPLE 16-64 YEARS OLD WITH ONE OR MORE HIGH-RISK MEDICAL CONDITIONS FOR SEVERE DISEASE FROM COVID-19

This population includes anyone with conditions that have been identified by the CDC as increasing risk for severe COVID-19 illness. The CDC may update the list of high-risk conditions as scientists learn more about COVID-19. NCDHHS will update the list accordingly:

- Asthma (moderate to severe)
- Cancer
- Cerebrovascular disease or history of stroke
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Cystic fibrosis
- Dementia or other neurologic condition
- Diabetes type 1 or 2
- Down Syndrome
- A heart condition such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy
- Hypertension or high blood pressure
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from: immune deficiencies, HIV, taking chronic steroids or other immune weakening medicines, history of solid organ blood or bone marrow transplant
- Liver disease, including hepatitis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Overweight or obesity
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease (not including sickle cell trait) or thalassemia
- Smoking (current or former, defined as having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime)

**PEOPLE LIVING IN A CLOSE GROUP LIVING SETTING**

This population includes anyone who is living in congregate or close group living settings who is not already vaccinated due to age, medical condition or job function, including:

- Homeless shelter
- Correctional facility, such as jail or prison

**ESSENTIAL WORKERS NOT YET VACCINATED**

Essential workers include:

- Those working in the essential sectors identified in Group 3 who did not meet the criteria for frontline. Essential sectors identified in Group 3 include critical manufacturing, education, essential goods, food and agriculture, government and community services, health care and public health, public safety and transportation. See [Deeper Dive Group 3](#)
- Those working in additional essential sectors as defined below.
  - **Chemical** (including workers in petrochemical plants, agricultural chemicals, pharmaceutical facilities, consumer products)
  - **Commercial facilities** (including retail workers, hotel workers)
  - **Communications and information technology** (including news reporters and staff, service repair dispatchers, data center operators)
  - **Defense industrial base** (including workers supporting essential services to meet national security commitments)
  - **Energy** (including electric, petroleum, natural and propane gas workers)
  - **Financial services** (including workers who maintain systems for processing financial transactions, workers needed to provide consumer access to banking and lending services)
  - **Hazardous materials** (including nuclear facilities workers, workers managing medical waste)
  - **Hygiene products and services** (including laundromats, sanitation workers)
  - **Public works and infrastructure support services** (including plumbers, electricians, exterminators, workers supporting parks)
  - **Residential facilities, housing and real estate**
  - **Water and wastewater** (including staff at water authorities, wastewater treatment facilities, water sampling and monitoring)

The [essential sectors and workers](#), as categorized by Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), align with federal prioritization [guidance](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions’ Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations.