

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), Office of Public Health Bureau of Community Preparedness (OPH BCP) is partnering with Louisiana 211 and the Louisiana Association of United Ways to ensure citizens can access the most current information available for COVID-19.

Louisiana citizens can dial 211, 24/7 to reach a live 211 specialist to discuss available help and information for COVID-19. Citizens can also text the keyword “LACOVID” to 898-211 to have instant access to the most current information available in our state.

COVID-19 FAQs for Louisiana

As of April 5, 2024 at 11:14am

ABOUT COVID-19

Q: What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, a coronavirus discovered in 2019. The virus spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Some people who are infected may not have symptoms. For people who have symptoms, illness can range from mild to severe.

Adults 65 years and older and people of any age with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness. People ages 6 months of age and older should get a COVID-19 vaccine to prevent getting and spreading the illness. Everyone ages 5 and older can get a booster shot.

Q: How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people or land on their eyes, noses, or mouth. In some circumstances, they may contaminate surfaces they touch.

Anyone infected with COVID-19 can spread it, even if they do NOT have symptoms.

Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms. The following are the symptoms according to the CDC:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms. For additional info about any of these symptoms and answers to your specific situation, you should contact your physician.

Q: Should I go to the ER? Or, when should I go to the ER?

You should go to the ER if you are seriously ill (difficulty breathing, confusion, dehydration). If you are sick with typical cold or flu symptoms, call your primary care doctor.

Q: What are the best steps to take to protect yourself and others?

The CDC recommends the following:

- Practicing basic health and hygiene practices, like handwashing.
- [Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Improving Ventilation](#)
- [Getting Tested for COVID-19 \(immediately if you have symptoms or 5 days after you've been exposed and no symptoms\)](#)
- [Following Recommendations for What to Do If You Have Been Exposed](#)
- [Staying Home If You Have Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#)
- [Seeking Treatment If You Have COVID-19 and Are at High Risk of Getting Very Sick](#)

- [Avoiding Contact with People Who Have Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#)

Q: What is the most recent CDC guidance for using masks?

- People may choose to mask at anytime regardless of vaccination status
- People should consider wearing a high-quality mask indoors
 - if you are at high risk for getting very sick
 - if you are gathering with individuals at a high risk of getting very sick, which includes older people and those with underlying health conditions. (And consider self-testing to detect infection before contact with these individuals)
 - If there is a current high rate of community spread of COVID-19
- Masks are effective in protecting infection against all of the currently circulating variants.

Q: What do I need to know about COVID-19 Variants?

Many viruses are constantly changing, including the virus that causes COVID-19. These changes occur over time and can lead to the [emergence of variants](#) that may have new characteristics, including different ways of spreading.

Q: Can you contract both the flu and COVID-19 at the same time?

It is possible to have both the coronavirus and the flu at the same time.

Q: Can I access free COVID-19 Counseling Services?

Yes, you can access a free crisis text line for confidential support, 24/7 by texting the word REACHOUT to 741741.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with stress, fear and anxiety related to COVID-19, you can access a special *Keeping Calm through COVID* Hotline at 1-866-310-7977. This connects you to trained, compassionate counselors who can offer support and who can direct you to mental health and substance abuse counseling services. *Trained counselors available 24/7. All calls are confidential.*

Q: What if I think I have Long COVID? What information is available about Long COVID?

Below is key information the CDC is sharing with the public. **Please visit the [CDC Long COVID webpage](#) for additional information and discuss your specific situation with your healthcare provider.**

- Long COVID can include a wide range of ongoing health problems; these conditions can last weeks, months, or years.
- Long COVID occurs more often in people who had severe COVID-19 illness, but anyone who has been infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 can experience it.
- People who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 and become infected may have a higher risk of developing Long COVID compared to people who have been vaccinated.
- People can be reinfected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, multiple times. Each time a person is infected or reinfected with SARS-CoV-2, they have a risk of developing Long COVID.
- While most people with Long COVID have evidence of infection or COVID-19 illness, in some cases, a person with Long COVID may not have tested positive for the virus or known they were infected.
- CDC and partners are working to understand more about who experiences Long COVID and why, including whether groups disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 are at higher risk.
- **In July 2021, Long COVID was added as a recognized condition that could result in a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Learn more: [Guidance on “Long COVID” as a Disability Under the ADA](#)**

LDH and State, and Federal Information

Q: When did the COVID-19 public health emergency end?

Effective May 11, 2023, there is no longer a federally declared public health emergency order in the United States, but Louisiana had already ended their state-level public health emergency orders for COVID-19, effective March 16, 2022, when Gov. Edwards allowed Louisiana’s statewide emergency order to end.

Q. Now that the COVID-19 public health emergency has ended, what do I need to know?

While most of CDC’s COVID-19 programs, activities and data collection will not be affected by the PHE’s expiration, reporting frequency and source data for some metrics will shift after May 11. CDC will continue to report valuable data to inform individual and

community public health actions to protect those at the highest risk of severe COVID-19. The priority remains to provide the information necessary to protect the nation's public health. Here are some updates for you to know:

- Vaccines will remain available. Go to this site to find a vaccine provider near you <https://www.vaccines.gov/>
- COVID-19 at-home tests may not be covered through insurance. Insurance providers will no longer be required to waive costs or provide free COVID-19 tests. CDC's [No Cost COVID-19 Testing Locator](#) can help people find current community and pharmacy partners participating in the [Increasing Community Access to Testing \(ICATT\) program](#).
- Treatments will remain available. Medication to prevent severe COVID-19, such as Paxlovid, will remain available for free while supplies last. After that, the price will be determined by the medication manufacturer and your health insurance coverage. Check with your healthcare provider if you need [early treatment to prevent severe COVID-19](#).
- National reporting of COVID-19 may change. Whatever changes in data collection take place, it will still allow CDC, local public health officials, and the members of the public to understand COVID-19 dynamics at the community level.
- If you have additional questions, contact CDC at COVIDTransition@cdc.gov.

Q: Is there one centralized location to get the most up-to-date information about COVID-19?

Yes. There is an online one-stop website [COVID.gov](https://www.covid.gov) for the most recent, up-to-date information about vaccines, tests, treatments, masks and other services and information for COVID-19.

The website also features a [Test-to-Treat Locator Tool](#) to help people find the nearest locations that offer COVID-19 tests and antiviral pills in pharmacies and community health centers. Just type in your zip code.

[COVID.gov](https://www.covid.gov) also provides people an easy way to find the level of COVID-19 in their community.

[COVID.gov](https://www.covid.gov) is available in English, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese and is accessible for those using assistive technologies.

These resources are also available by phone through the National Hotline at 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 1-888-720-7489), which supports over 150 languages.

For individuals with disabilities who may need additional support, the Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL) is also available to help at 1-888-677-1199 or via email at DIAL@usaginganddisability.org.

Q: Where can I get the most up-to-date information in Louisiana pertaining to COVID-19?

LDH recommends going to the federal Department of Health and Human Services site [COVID.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) for the most up-to-date information about COVID-19.

LDH no longer has COVID-19 specific page for COVID-19 data collection. It now features a [Respiratory Virus Dashboard](#) that provides data for COVID-19, RSV and Influenza (flu)

Q: Is LDH COVID-19 Support Vaccine Hotline still active?

No, the LDH COVID-19 Support Vaccine Hotline: 1-855-453-0774 has closed. They are directing the public to the following new numbers for information:

- If you have questions related to COVID-19 vaccines including scheduling an appointment **please contact the LDH Immunization Program: 504-568-2600**
- If you have questions about the Safer Smarter Schools COVID-19 Testing program please contact 504-568-8241
- Testing positive and need resources to stay home or protect others from COVID-19 contact the Community Healthways Program at your nearest Parish Health Unit.
- For more information about COVID-19 please go to [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov) and the best one-stop COVID-19 site related to masks, testing, vaccines and treatment and COVID-19 guidance in your parish and nationally please visit [COVID.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

Q: Is wastewater testing used to track COVID-19 spreading in the community?

Yes, Testing wastewater for the presence of SARS-CoV-2 can serve as an early warning that COVID-19 is spreading in a community. Wastewater data for treatment plants in Louisiana that are participating in the National Wastewater Surveillance System can be found [here](#).

PREVENTING SPREAD OF COVID-19 TO OTHERS

Q: What should I do to prevent others from getting COVID-19 if I'm sick? (if you test positive and/or develop symptoms)?

CDC recommends that if you have symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, you stay home and away from others who are not sick. Please check with your healthcare provider if you have questions about your illness outside of this general guidance.

- You can go back to your normal activities when, for at least 24 hours both of the following are true:
 - Your symptoms are getting better overall and
 - You have not had a fever (and are not using fever reducing medication)
- When you go back to your normal activities, take added precaution over the next 5 days that may include hygiene, wearing masks, physical distancing and/or testing when you will be around other people indoors.
 - You may still be able to spread the virus even if you are feeling better.
 - You are likely to be less contagious depending on factors like how long you were sick or how sick you were
 - However, some people, especially people with weakened immune systems, can continue to spread the virus for a longer period of time.
 - For COVID-19, taking an [antigen test](#) can help you know how likely you are to spread the virus. A positive test tends to mean it is more likely that you can spread the virus to others.
 - Monitor your symptoms. If you have an emergency warning sign (like trouble breathing or chest pain), seek emergency medical care immediately.

Q: What if I develop a fever or start to feel worse after going back to normal activities?

If you develop a fever or start to feel worse after you have gone back to normal activities, stay home and away from others again until, for at least 24 hours, both are true: your symptoms are improving overall, and you have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication). Then take added precaution for the next 5 days. Talk to a healthcare provider if you have questions about your symptoms and illness outside of this general guidance.

Q: If I had moderate or severe illness or have a weak immune system, when can I return to normal activities?

If you have questions or concerns please consult your doctor before returning to normal activities. If you are unsure if your symptoms are moderate or severe or if you have a weakened immune system, talk to a healthcare provider for further guidance.

TESTING for COVID-19

Q: When should I be tested for the virus?

LDH/CDC recommends that all people - vaccinated and unvaccinated - should take a COVID test 5 days after a known or suspected exposure to COVID-19 or immediately if you develop symptoms.

If you have mild symptoms and are worried that you might have COVID-19, call your doctor or local health department instead of going to a clinic or doctor's office without an appointment, to ensure you aren't potentially exposing others to the virus. Do not go to the Emergency Room for a test or if you have mild symptoms.

If you have severe breathing problems, seek medical attention or call 911 immediately and let the person you speak with know that you have respiratory problems and need to be isolated and seen right away.

Q: Where can I get tested for COVID-19 for low or no cost? (or no doctor or insurance)

As of May 11, 2023, People are encouraged to do over-the-counter testing at home. You can still order free home tests through [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov) but future access might change as the Biden administration has paused buying tests and supply may be limited.

If you prefer or need to find an in-person testing site, Please contact [a HRSA health center](#), [Test to Treat](#) site, or [ICATT location](#) near you to learn how to access low- or no-cost COVID-19 tests provided by the federal government.

Here is the [Test-to-Treat Locator Tool](#) where treatment options will also be provided if test positive and are at risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms

Here is the CDC [no-cost COVID-19 Testing Locator tool](#):

Please call the site in advance to check on availability of tests and appointments/walk-ins.

Testing is also free at all federally qualified health centers (community clinics). You can search for a clinic near you at: <https://pca.net/health-centers/search/> Just enter your zip code in the search tool to find a nearby clinic. You should contact the clinic first to get information about their testing options, procedures and requirements.

Q: Where can my infant or young child under age two be tested for COVID-19?

Please contact your pediatrician about testing your infant/child for COVID-19.

Q: How available are at-home tests to detect COVID-19.

Over-the-counter COVID-19 tests are at pharmacies and other locations throughout the state. You can also still order free home tests through [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/covidtests) but future access might change as the Biden administration has paused buying tests and supply may be limited.

Q: What is the cost for at-home COVID-19 test kits?

You can still order free home tests through [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/covidtests) but future access might change as the Biden administration has paused buying tests and supply may be limited.

Costs can vary if purchasing online or at a store, but they are widely available at pharmacies and national chain stores throughout the country

Please check with your health insurance provider for the most up-to-date information about their coverage or reimbursement for at-home COVID-19 test kits and diagnostic tests performed by a laboratory

Q: Is LDH giving out free at-home rapid COVID-19 test kits?

No LDH is not giving out free at-home rapid COVID-19 test kits.

Q: Is the federal government giving out free at-home COVID-19 Test Kits? How do I get them?

Yes, starting September 25, 2023, every U.S. household is able to order again at [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov) one set of 4 free at-home tests delivered to your home from USPS.com as the Biden administration relaunched this free testing program for the fall in response to the recent surge of COVID-19 cases. These tests will detect the currently circulating COVID-19 variants.

Here's what you need to know about ordering:

- Limit of 1 order of 4 tests per residential address
- Each order includes four individual rapid antigen COVID-19 tests (FDA approved with results in about a half hour – [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov) has more details about at-home tests, including extended shelf life and updated expiration dates from [FDA](https://www.fda.gov) website)
- Only need to submit your contact information and shipping address to place an order
- Orders will ship free starting early October.

To place an order for at-home tests with enhanced accessibility for blind or low vision people – please order at this [link](#). You can also place an order by phone at 1-800-232-0233 and the hearing impaired can call 1-888-720-7489 for assistance.

Q: Do immigrants have access to onsite clinical testing regardless of identification?

The onsite clinical testing criteria for COVID-19 does not require showing official government identification. Everyone, including documented and undocumented immigrants have access to testing if they choose to go onsite.

Q: I did not test positive for COVID-19 but I am interested in taking an antibody test to confirm if I have developed an immunity. Is this possible?

Check with your healthcare provider. If you can find a provider doing the antibody test, then yes, it might be possible to get such a test.

Q: What are the current CDC testing requirements for international travel to the US?

Here are the latest CDC domestic and international travel guidelines: [Domestic Travel During COVID-19 | CDC](#) and [International Travel | CDC](#)

TREATMENT FOR COVID-19

Q: What are the current guidance and options for treatment if I become sick with COVID-19?

- If you have COVID-19 and are [more likely to get very sick](#) from COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider. Treatments are available that can reduce your risk of hospitalization and death. [Link to treatment options](#)
- **Don't delay contacting your healthcare provider. Treatment as determined by your provider must be started within 5-7 days after you first develop symptoms.**
- The [Treatment Locator \(hhs.gov\)](#) can also help you find a location that offers testing and treatment or a pharmacy where you can fill your prescription. If preferred, you can call 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 1-888-720-7489) for this info.
- For those who aren't high risk and have moderate symptoms CDC recommends that you rest, drink fluids, and use over-the-counter medicines for fever, which can help reduce symptoms and help you manage your illness. Please contact your healthcare provider to discuss your individual situation.

Q: How do I know if I'm at high risk of getting very sick that could lead to hospitalization or death from COVID-19?

Please consult with your healthcare provider to determine if you are "high risk". People who are more likely to get very sick include:

- Older adults (ages 50 years or older, with risk increasing with age)
- People who are unvaccinated,
- People with [certain medical conditions](#), such as chronic lung disease, heart disease, or a weakened immune system.

COVID-19 VACCINES

Q: What is the most current information about vaccines? (eligibility, sites, costs)

- As of September 12, 2023, CDC recommends that everyone aged 5 years and older get 1 dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine to protect against serious illness from COVID-19.
- CDC recommends the 2023–2024 updated COVID-19 vaccines: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or Novavax, to protect against serious illness from COVID-19.
- Children aged 6 months–4 years need multiple doses of COVID-19 vaccines to be up to date, including at least 1 dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- People aged 65 years and older who received 1 dose of any updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna or Novavax) should receive 1 additional dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine at least 4 months after the previous updated dose.
- People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised may get additional doses of updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- COVID-19 vaccines are covered by insurance, including private insurance, Medicare plans, and Medicaid plans.
- You can locate a vaccine provider at this site <https://www.vaccines.gov/>
- To get a list of vaccine locations near you, text your ZIP code to GETVAX (438829) in English, or VACUNA (822862) in Spanish.
- Uninsured children and uninsured adults also have access through the [Vaccine for Children Program](#) and [Bridge Access Program](#).

Q: Is parental consent needed for a person under age 18 to get the COVID-19 Vaccine? If so, can the consent be given by someone other than the parent? Can it also be given over the phone?

Yes, yes and yes.

- Parental consent for anyone under 18 years old is required. This can be done in person or via a signed consent form found on this [link](#)
- If the minor child is accompanied by an adult who is not the parent, the form is still required and is valid.
- Over-the-phone consent can be used, if necessary, but written is preferred.

Emancipated youths should check with the vaccine provider to determine what documentation (if any) is needed.

Q: Are children eligible for the vaccine?

Yes, here is the most current info:

- As of September 12, 2023, CDC recommends that everyone aged 5 years and older get 1 dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine to protect against serious illness from COVID-19.
- CDC recommends the 2023–2024 updated COVID-19 vaccines: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or Novavax, to protect against serious illness from COVID-19.
- Children aged 6 months–4 years need multiple doses of COVID-19 vaccines to be up to date, including at least 1 dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine.

Q: I am currently pregnant or planning to get pregnant or breastfeeding. Is it safe for me to get the COVID-19 vaccination?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccination is recommended by the CDC for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant now, as well as people who might become pregnant in the future. People who get a COVID-19 infection during pregnancy are more likely to deliver a preterm (born earlier than 37 weeks of pregnancy) or stillborn infant and may also be more likely to have other pregnancy complications.

COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy helps:

- Prevent severe illness and death in people who are pregnant
- Protect children aged 6 months to 5 years from hospitalization caused by COVID-19

Learn more about vaccination considerations and the [safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines](#) for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

For questions or concerns about your specific situation please discuss with your healthcare provider or contact the LDH Immunization Program: 504-568-2600

Q. What does it mean to be “up to date” on your COVID-19 vaccines?

According to the CDC, A person is [up to date](#) with their COVID-19 vaccines when they have received all doses recommended for their age and health status. They recommend everyone receive the updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines to prevent serious illness.

Q: Where can I find a location to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

- COVID-19 vaccines are widely available in all of Louisiana's 64 parishes, including at pharmacies, hospitals, health care clinics and doctor's offices.
- For a list of locations, visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), which is maintained by the federal government.
- To get a list of vaccine locations near you, text your ZIP code to GETVAX (438829) in English, or VACUNA (822862) in Spanish.

Q: Do I have to make an appointment or can I just walk in?

It is recommended that you contact a participating provider or register online with the provider to make an appointment. You can find a provider at the federal vaccine locator site [https://www.vaccines.gov/](https://www.vaccines.gov). If you arrive without an appointment it is not guaranteed that you will be able to be vaccinated or there might be a wait involved.

Q: What do I do if there is no pharmacy or other vaccine provider near me?

For a full list of the vaccine providers and locations please go to [Vaccines.gov - Find COVID-19 vaccine locations near you](https://www.vaccines.gov)

If you still need assistance finding a location or scheduling a vaccine please call the **LDH Immunization Program: 504-568-2600**

Q: What do I do if I am homebound and cannot visit a COVID-19 vaccine provider?

Please contact your healthcare provider (especially if receiving other healthcare services in the home). If they are not able to assist or you do not have a healthcare provider that provides services in the home please contact the LDH Immunization Program: 504-568-2600 for scheduling assistance.

Q: How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

Please go to this [CDC site](https://www.cdc.gov) to better understand how the vaccines work.

Q: Are the vaccines safe?

COVID-19 vaccines have undergone the most extensive safety analysis in U.S. history. Because the updated mRNA COVID-19 vaccines for 2023-2024 are very similar to the previous mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, their safety is firmly supported by data from

earlier clinical trials and from complementary vaccine safety monitoring systems. The updated COVID-19 vaccines now available in the United States will provide better protection against variants currently making people sick. CDC and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, keep people informed of findings, and use data to make COVID-19 vaccination recommendations.

Q: Are there side effects to getting the vaccine?

The most common reactions reported following COVID-19 vaccination are minor, including pain, redness, and swelling where the shot was given, a headache, fever, muscle aches, chills, or fatigue. A severe allergic reaction, like anaphylaxis, is rare. If you or your child gets a COVID-19 vaccine and you think you/they might be having a severe allergic reaction after leaving the vaccination provider site, seek immediate medical care by calling 911.

If you have concerns about allergies and COVID-19 vaccines, you should speak with a doctor or primary healthcare provider before vaccination. They may consider referring you or your child to an allergist-immunologist.

Q: What if I'm concerned about allergies or adverse reactions to the vaccines?

Those with concerns, especially if you have a history of allergies or adverse reactions to other vaccines should consult with their doctor before getting vaccinated.

If you do not have a healthcare provider to ask your questions please contact the **LDH Immunization Program: 504-568-2600**

Q: What are the symptoms of an allergic reaction to the vaccine? What should I do if I have these symptoms after getting the vaccine?

Severe allergic reactions to vaccines are rare but can happen. If you get a COVID-19 vaccine and you think you might be having a severe allergic reaction after leaving the vaccination provider site, seek immediate medical care by calling 911.

A severe allergic reaction can cause:

- difficulty breathing or wheezing,
- a drop in blood pressure,
- swelling of the tongue or throat, or

- a generalized rash or hives, which may include mucus membranes.

Q: Are COVID vaccines for children safe? What are the benefits and the severe reactions I should be aware of?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccines are proven to be safe for children ages 6 months and up and help guard against severe COVID-19 outcomes, including certain heart conditions, long-term complications, hospitalization and death.

COVID-19 vaccines have undergone the most extensive safety analysis in U.S. history. Because the updated mRNA COVID-19 vaccines for 2023-2024 are very similar to the previous mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, their safety is firmly supported by data from earlier clinical trials and from complementary vaccine safety monitoring systems. The updated COVID-19 vaccines now available in the United States will provide better protection against variants currently making people sick. CDC and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, keep people informed of findings, and use data to make [COVID-19 vaccination recommendations](#).

Serious reactions after COVID-19 vaccination in children and teens are rare. A severe reaction may happen after any vaccination, including COVID-19 vaccines. Through national vaccine reporting systems, CDC ensures COVID-19 vaccine safety and monitors rare reactions among children and teens including rare reports of anaphylaxis, myocarditis, and febrile seizures. The benefits of COVID-19 vaccination and possible severe complications continue to outweigh any potential risks.

Please contact your child's pediatrician for any questions/concerns and the benefits of the vaccine.

Q: Can the COVID-19 vaccine be administered at the same time as other routine vaccines, like the flu vaccine?

Per the CDC, there is no recommended waiting period between getting a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines. You can [get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines](#), including a flu vaccine, at the same visit.

Q: How long will the vaccine offer protection?

All COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States are effective at protecting people from getting seriously ill, being hospitalized, and dying. Studies suggest COVID

vaccines are most effective in the first few months following your vaccine and you should follow CDC guidance when updated vaccines become available. As with other vaccine-preventable diseases, you are best protected from COVID-19 when you stay up to date with the recommended vaccinations. The 2023–2024 updated COVID-19 vaccines more closely targets the XBB lineage of the Omicron variant and could restore protection against severe COVID-19 that may have decreased over time. We anticipate the updated vaccines will be better at fighting currently circulating variants.

Q: I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine? How long must I wait?

Yes, the CDC recommends you get a COVID-19 vaccine even if you already had COVID-19.

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine after you recover from COVID-19 infection provides added protection against COVID-19. You may consider delaying your vaccine by 3 months. However, certain factors could be reasons to get a vaccine sooner rather than later, such as:

- personal risk of severe disease,
- risk of disease in a loved one or close contact,
- local [COVID-19 hospital admission level](#),
- and the most common COVID-19 variant currently causing illness.

People who already had COVID-19 and do not get vaccinated after their recovery are more likely to get COVID-19 again than those who get vaccinated after their recovery.

Learn more about the [benefits of getting a COVID-19 vaccine](#).

Q: Why should I get vaccinated if I might get COVID-19 anyway?

COVID-19 vaccines are working well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Compared to people who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations, unvaccinated people are more likely to get COVID-19, much more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19, and much more likely to die from COVID-19.

CDC recommends everyone 6 months and older get an updated COVID-19 vaccine to protect against the potentially serious outcomes of COVID-19 illness.

Vaccination remains the best protection against COVID-19-related hospitalization and death. Vaccination also reduces your chance of suffering the effects of Long COVID, which can develop during or following acute infection and last for an extended duration. If you have not received a COVID-19 vaccine in the past 2 months, get an updated COVID-19 vaccine to protect yourself.

Q: Is the vaccine only available to Louisiana residents or can someone from out of state or country or who recently immigrated get the vaccine?

Louisiana is not limiting vaccinations to Louisiana residents or U.S citizens. The vaccine is available to anyone who is determined eligible to receive it.

Q: I prefer one brand of the vaccine instead of the other(s). How can I find a place that is using the brand I prefer?

The best way is to go to the federal government's vaccine locator website to find options for providers administering the brand you prefer closest to your zip code <https://www.vaccines.gov/>

Q: Can I get a COVID vaccine that is different from the previous brand I received?

Yes, per the CDC, eligible people can get any of the three available (Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax) updated COVID-19 vaccine doses, regardless of which shot they received first.

Q: Are there any incentive programs currently in place for the COVID-19 vaccine?

No, there are no other incentive programs in place.

Q: I'm currently sick with COVID. Can I get the vaccine?

No, per the CDC people with COVID-19 who have symptoms should wait to be vaccinated until they have recovered from their illness and have met the criteria for discontinuing isolation.

Q: Do I need to stay in my provider's office after I get the vaccine?

Yes. Everyone who gets a COVID-19 vaccination will wait at the location they received it to make sure everything is OK. This is because if something were to happen, it would

happen quickly. Your provider is looking for facial redness or flushing, an increased or rapid heartbeat or shortness of breath.

CDC currently recommends the following observation periods after vaccination:

- 15 minutes for most people
- 30 minutes for people with a known reaction to a different type of COVID-19 vaccine
- 30 minutes for people with a history of non-severe, immediate allergic reaction to a vaccine

Q: Can the COVID-19 vaccines change my DNA?

No, per the CDC, the COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way.

Q: Some people are getting sick with COVID-19 after getting vaccinated. How is this possible?

This is possible because no vaccine is 100% effective. The virus that causes COVID-19 is also always changing, and protection from COVID-19 vaccines declines over time. Receiving an updated COVID-19 vaccine can restore protection and provide enhanced protection against the variants currently responsible for most infections and hospitalizations in the United States. Last season, those who received a 2022-2023 COVID-19 vaccine saw greater protection against illness and hospitalization than those who did not receive a 2022-2023 vaccine. To date, hundreds of millions of people have safely received a COVID-19 vaccine under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history.

Q: What if I or a friend/family member have a disability? Is there support for accessing vaccines?

Yes, the U.S. Health and Human Services has a national hotline to connect people with disabilities to information and services to improve access to COVID-19 vaccines. This hotline, called the **Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL) 888-677-1199 from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM CT**, is available to help people with disabilities:

- find vaccination locations in their communities, assist callers with making vaccination appointments, and connect callers to local services – such as accessible transportation – to overcome barriers to vaccination.
- provide information and resources to answer questions and address concerns about the vaccines
- connect callers to information and services that promote independent living and address fundamental needs, such as food, housing, and transportation.

DIAL is operated as a collaboration between a consortium of organizations serving people with disabilities and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), which administers the Eldercare Locator.

Information to learn more about and connect with DIAL: acl.gov/dial; 888-677-1199 from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM ET; DIAL@n4a.org

Q: How can I prove my vaccination status?

There are several legally acceptable methods:

1. You can carry your physical vaccination card, which you received at the time you got your shots. If you do so, consider having it laminated.
2. You can use Louisiana’s digital driver’s license app, LA Wallet, to digitally display your Covid vaccination status (LA Wallet is available here: [https://lawallet.com/.](https://lawallet.com/))
3. You can register with Louisiana’s online vaccine registry, MyIR, and have the option to either print or digitally display a Covid-19 vaccine status. You can access MyIR [here.](#)
4. Finally, you could go to your healthcare provider and ask them to print a copy of your vaccination records on their official letterhead, with a date and signature, just as you would for a child’s vaccination status for their schools.

Q: I have lost/misplaced my COVID-19 vaccine card. How can I get another one?

You can register or log into MyIR to see all of your Louisiana vaccination records, and print out a copy of your records, which will also serve as proof of vaccination status. You can access MyIR [here.](#)

If you prefer or are not able to do that online, please contact the vaccine provider. They will have your records on file, and will be able to fill a new card out for you. If you

received your vaccination at a site which is no longer in operation, your local parish health unit or primary care physician will be able to access your records on Louisiana's Immunization Information System, LINKS. Please be sure that all details entered are a match for your Louisiana driver's license or state ID, including name, DOB, address, and zip code, or you will not be able to download your vaccination status to LA Wallet.

Q: What should I do if my vaccination record card becomes full?

Vaccination Record Cards for many recipients of COVID-19 vaccines are now full. This is especially true for those over 50 years of age or immunocompromised individuals seeking additional boosters.

If a vaccination card is full, the CDC recommends the following:

- Providers should complete a new card for the patient
- Patient should staple both cards together
- Patients should photograph both cards in case they become separated
- Patients should bring both cards to future vaccination appointments

LONG COVID

Q: What is Long COVID (or Post-COVID)?

- Long COVID is broadly defined as signs, symptoms, and conditions that developed or continue to linger a month or more after COVID-19 infection.
- Long COVID is a real illness and can result in chronic conditions that require comprehensive care.
- People with Long Covid often have symptoms that are similar to or overlap with other health conditions.
- Please consult with a healthcare provider about your symptoms and specific situation.
- CDC and partners are working to understand more about who experiences Long COVID and why. For more information from CDC go to this [link](#)

SCHOOLS QUESTIONS

Q: What if I have questions or need COVID-19 information related to schools in Louisiana?

State Level Information: For the most up-to-date information about schools and education-specific questions at the state level, the Department of Education has established a special email address: LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov

Local School Districts: We encourage you to contact your child's school or school district for the most up-to-date local information.

Q: When can my child or when can I as a teacher/staff return to school after being exposed, having symptoms or being sick with COVID-19?

Parents, teachers and staff should discuss and follow the specific guidelines of your school.

Q: Will the COVID-19 vaccine be mandatory for school children or childcare?

No. The COVID-19 vaccine will not be added to the schedule of immunizations required for school and child day care entry.

WORKFORCE QUESTIONS

Q: When can someone who had COVID-19 symptoms or tested positive return to work?

People should check with their employer about their COVID-19 company policies about staying home and returning to work for employees with COVID-19 symptoms and/or positive test results. It is recommended that a person who has COVID-19 symptoms should get tested for COVID-19 and/or consult with a healthcare provider and wear a mask while awaiting test results.

Q: What should I do if I think I've been exposed at work?

If you think you've been exposed at work please check with your employer about their COVID-19 company policies. The CDC is no longer recommending quarantine for people exposed to COVID-19, but recommends that people wear a well-fitting mask for

10 days and get a test 5 days after exposure. If the person develops symptoms before 5 days then they should test themselves sooner and isolate themselves from others while awaiting test results. Any person can self-report their own health status to others.

Q: What do I do if my employer demands I get tested for COVID-19 if I was sick?

There are different rules/laws for private and public employers. In state government, an employee may be placed on sick leave and be required to stay home if he/she is ill for any reason. In the private sector, the employee should follow the directive of their employer.

Q: Are employers required to notify employees if one employee tested positive for COVID-19?

No, there is no law or CDC guidance that requires an employer to notify others that someone else has tested positive for the virus. Each business can implement their own policies and reporting requirements for their employees.

Q: Are employers required to pay employees who must isolate due to testing positive for COVID?

The decision to pay or not pay employees or require them to use sick or annual leave for time off to isolate is at the discretion of each individual employer. Please check with your company for their policy.

Q: Does my employer have access to my vaccination records?

No, vaccination records, like all medical records, are available only to the patient, the individual's healthcare provider and to select other public health officials.

MPOX (formerly Monkeypox) INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Q: Where can I get information about Mpox in Louisiana?

LDH has a [webpage](#) with information and resources about Mpox in Louisiana

Q: What is Mpox?

Mpox is a potentially serious viral illness that typically involves flu-like symptoms, swelling of the lymph nodes and a possibly painful rash that includes bumps that are initially filled with fluid before scabbing over.

Most people with Mpox recover in 2-4 weeks, but the disease can be serious, especially for immunocompromised people, children and pregnant people, and some people have died.

Q: How is Mpox spread?

Mpox spreads in different ways. Mpox virus is most often spread from one person to another, through direct contact with a rash or sores of someone who has the virus.

It can also spread through contact with clothing, bedding and other shared items used by a person with Mpox; or via respiratory droplets that can be passed through prolonged face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact including kissing, cuddling or sex.

People who do not have Mpox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

Q: What are the symptoms of Mpox?

Someone may experience all or only a few of the symptoms of Mpox. Symptoms of Mpox can include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and backache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion
- A rash that can look like pimples or blisters that appears on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body, like the hands, feet, chest, genitals or anus

Sometimes people get a rash first, followed by other symptoms. Others only experience a rash. Some cases in the current U.S. outbreak have experienced only isolated rashes in the genital region or other body parts (e.g., hands, chest, face, in the mouth). Lesions are often described as painful until the healing phase when they become itchy (crusts).

Symptoms usually start within two weeks of exposure to the virus but can start up to three weeks later. Within 1-3 days of symptoms beginning, people usually develop a rash or sores.

Please contact your healthcare provider immediately if you think you have symptoms and avoid sex or other close, intimate contact until you have been checked out.

**Q: What do I do if I think I have been exposed or have symptoms for Mpox?
Where can I get tested?**

LDH recommends contacting your healthcare provider immediately and avoid sex or other close, intimate contact until you have been checked out.

If you have symptoms and would like to be tested for Mpox, contact your healthcare provider. Anyone without a provider or insurance can also be tested at their local [parish health unit](#) or community clinic:

Testing is free at parish health units. Turnaround time is about 1-2 days or longer over the weekend. Test results are sent to the provider and the provider responds to the patient with the results.

If your test for Mpox is positive, stay isolated until your rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed.

Q: Are there vaccines available for monkeypox in Louisiana? Where can I get the vaccine? Who is eligible? Can I just show up at one of the sites?

Yes, the vaccine for Mpox is available in Louisiana to eligible groups. The vaccine is two doses, administered 28 days apart. Full protection begins two weeks after the second shot. The Mpox vaccine is FDA approved and available at no cost to the individual.

List of all locations in Louisiana that have received Mpox vaccine in Louisiana can be found at this [link](#)

LDH recommends you call ahead because at this time vaccine supplies are very limited and may not always be available.

The following groups are currently eligible for the Mpox vaccine. If you do not meet this criteria please check with one of the vaccine providers on this [list](#)

- **Gay/bisexual men or transgender people who are sexually active with more than one partner**
- **Anyone who is at high risk of Mpox exposure:** This includes but is not limited to people who:
 - Are HIV positive or receive medicines to prevent HIV infection (PrEP)
 - Are experiencing homelessness
 - Use IV drugs
 - Give or receive money or other goods in exchange for sex
 - Have significant, skin-to-skin contact with others in a social or sexual venue
 - Work at establishments where close, intimate activity occurs (e.g., bathhouses, saunas, sex clubs, hotels)
- **Clinicians or laboratory staff who are at high risk of occupational exposure**
- **Anyone who has been determined to be at high risk by a healthcare provider or public health official**

LDH has notified providers of this updated guidance, which is effective immediately. If individuals want more details about eligibility before calling a vaccine site they can visit the LDH [FAQ website](#)

Important note from LDH: Anyone can contract Mpox and the current eligibility criteria are only limited to the above groups because they are most at risk based on the diagnoses we have seen. The eligibility criteria will be expanded as additional vaccine becomes available and/or demographics of the current outbreak change.

Q: Can I get a COVID-19 and Mpox vaccine at the same time?

LDH says it is ok to get both your COVID and Mpox vaccinations at the same time. Both vaccines are often offered at Mpox vaccine events. For questions about your individual situation and/or other vaccines please speak with your healthcare provider.

Q: How do hospitals or other healthcare providers obtain Monkeypox vaccine for their patients?

Healthcare providers can request Mpox vaccines by contacting their LDH Regional Immunization Consultant. If they are unaware of who their consultant is please refer them to the LDH Immunization Program in the Office of Public Health at 504-599-0128.