

Pharmacies Urged to Offer COVID-19 Vaccine to Everyone Eligible, Age 6 Months and Up

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) urges pharmacies to offer COVID-19 vaccinations for all ages for whom the COVID-19 vaccine is recommended, including children ages 6 months to 5 years once they are eligible. Vaccines for this age group could be authorized, recommended, and available as early as June 20, 2022.

This recommendation for pharmacies to vaccinate all ages is made for several reasons:

- Because of barriers accessing health care, some families may not be able to have immunizations done through a primary care provider.
- A recent report by the Commonwealth Fund indicates that U.S. COVID-19 vaccination programs have saved more than 2 million lives, prevented 17 million hospitalizations, and eliminated billions of dollars in health care costs.¹
- Pharmacies are well positioned to support families with more locations, shorter travel distance, and longer business hours than many primary care facilities.

The following information can help you offer services to what may be a new age group for you.

Authorization to Order and Administer Vaccines to Children

Pharmacists are allowed and encouraged to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to children authorized to receive them through the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and recommended to receive them by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Western States Scientific Review Workgroup, and Washington state guidance. The following authorizations will permit a pharmacist to order/prescribe a vaccine for a child under age 5 years once they are eligible:

- **Authority to administer COVID-19 vaccines:** Here is a list of [providers authorized to administer vaccines in Washington state](#), including pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians. A valid order/prescription is required to administer a vaccine.
- **Authority to order COVID-19 vaccines:** Vaccines may be administered only pursuant to a valid order/prescription from an authorized health care provider. Pharmacists have several sources of authority for ordering COVID-19 vaccines, some of which are temporary.
 - **State standing orders:** Health care providers who are legally authorized to administer COVID-19 vaccines may do so under [current DOH standing orders](#), issued pursuant to the federal PREP Act. This authority will expire when the HHS Secretary's PREP Act [declaration](#) is rescinded.

- We expect to post standing orders for vaccinating children ages 6 months to 5 years within 4 business days of the vaccine being available for this age group.
- **Federal PREP Act Declaration:** State-licensed pharmacists are authorized to order COVID-19 vaccines for persons ages 3 and older, subject to the requirements of the HHS Secretary’s PREP Act [declaration](#). This authority will expire when the declaration is rescinded.
- **Pharmacy Collaborative Drug Therapy Agreement:** Under state law, pharmacists may order COVID-19 vaccines pursuant to a valid CDTA. This authority will remain in effect when the above-described temporary authority for pharmacists to order COVID-19 vaccines expires. The CDTA would need to delineate the scope of the pharmacist’s prescriptive authority and meet the minimum requirements of the Commission in rule ([WAC 246-945-350](#)). The CDTA would need to permit the pharmacist to order/prescribe the vaccine to children under 5.
 - Find more information in the Washington State Pharmacy Quality Assurance Commission’s [Guidance on Collaborative Drug Therapy](#).

Training and Equipment

Training and equipment to administer vaccines for children ages 6 months to 5 years are like those for other ages. Here are tools and some information to help you and your staff.

Vaccine Administration

Staff administering vaccines should be competent to ensure not only the safety of the child being vaccinated, but also their own safety. Several online training programs may help you and your staff review:

- Administration technique
- Proper injection site (arm or thigh depending on age and other factors)
- Vaccine preparation
- Other safety elements

Depending on previous experiences and training, these resources alone may not fully train your staff to perform vaccinations. However, they are good refresher tools.

Webinars and more: Find other helpful resources on [DOH’s Clinical Information for COVID-19 Vaccine Providers webpage](#). It includes things like CDC tools, webinar recordings, frequently asked questions, and more.

Responding to Medical Emergencies and Severe Vaccine Reactions

Anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction) after COVID-19 vaccine is rare; the CDC reports the rate is about 5 cases per 1 million vaccine doses administered². However, DOH standing orders require those administering vaccinations to be trained and qualified to recognize the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis in case it does happen, as well as administer intramuscular epinephrine and manage emergencies during the post-vaccination monitoring period.

Emergency equipment:

- **CDC recommended equipment:** The CDC recommends the following emergency equipment should be immediately available to assess and manage anaphylaxis³:

| Should be available at all locations | If feasible, include at locations (not required) |
|---|---|
| Epinephrine (e.g., prefilled syringe, autoinjector)* | Pulse oximeter |
| H1 antihistamine (e.g., diphenhydramine, cetirizine)† | Oxygen |
| Blood pressure monitor‡ | Bronchodilator (e.g., albuterol) |
| Timing device to assess pulse | H2 antihistamine (e.g., famotidine, cimetidine) |
| | Intravenous fluids |
| | Intubation kit |
| | Pocket mask with one-way valve (also known as cardiopulmonary resuscitation [CPR] mask) sized for adults and children |

- **DOH required equipment:** DOH standing orders require the following:
 - At least three (3) doses of epinephrine appropriately sized for patient weight
 - H1 antihistamine
 - Blood pressure monitor
 - Timing device to assess pulse rate
- **Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) are recommended but not required:** Although staff administering vaccines should be trained and able to respond to emergencies and having an AED on site is a best practice, there is no requirement for an AED unless your policy or organization requires it. Other emergency measures are critical if an emergency occurs, including effective CPR if indicated. If an AED is available in your facility, follow the manufacturer’s guidelines for the use of the appropriately sized pads (child or adult). Do not cut or modify AED pads. Check with your device manufacturer or manual for additional information. AED certification classes will teach your staff how to properly use adult-size pads on a child if no child pads are available.

Needles and Syringes

Administration kits provided with the vaccines will have appropriately sized needles, including length and gauge for mixing and administration of pediatric vaccinations.

Useful Toolkits

- [Vaccinating Youth webpage](#) for providers includes educational materials, communication toolkits, clinical resources, training links, and more
- [DOH pediatric toolkit for providers](#) (also available on the Vaccinating Youth page above) DOH’s [COVID-19 vaccine provider toolkit](#) includes education and communication materials, conversation guides, process guides, and more.

Share That You’re Available

In your [Vaccine Locator](#) (statewide) and [VaccineFinder](#) (nationwide) listings, please identify the ages that your facility is able to vaccinate. In Vaccine Locator, the parent or patient is able to sort by pediatric vaccine. Reporting your ages will allow your facility to be listed in the search.

Thank You for Protecting People

DOH appreciates pharmacies who are able to offer COVID-19 vaccinations for children ages 6 months to 5 years, in addition to those 5 and older. If you are unable to vaccinate this age group, please help support widespread vaccination by referring your clients to a nearby facility that does offer vaccination to this age group.

Thank you for your help to vaccinate people in Washington to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 disease.

For more information, contact covid.vaccine@doh.wa.gov.

Resources

- [Clinical Information for COVID-19 Vaccine Providers](#), including standing orders (DOH)
- [Vaccination site and needle selection guidance](#) (CDC)
- [Pfizer vaccine product guide](#) (CDC)
- The CDC's [Interim Clinical Guidance for COVID-19 Vaccination](#) (CDC)
- [Vaccine Administration Competencies Assessment Form](#) (CDC): Screening checklist to ensure staff are ready to vaccinate
- [Interim Considerations: Preparing for the Potential Management of Anaphylaxis after COVID-19 Vaccination](#) (CDC)
- [Medical Management of Vaccine Reactions in Children and Teens in a Community Setting](#) (Immunization Action Coalition): Table outlining steps to take if an adverse reaction occurs following vaccination
- [You Call the Shots](#) (CDC): web-based vaccination training course

References

1. Eric C. Schneider et al. "Impact of U.S. COVID-19 Vaccination Efforts: An Update on Averted Deaths, Hospitalizations, and Health Care Costs Through March 2022." *To the Point* (blog), Commonwealth Fund, Apr. 8, 2022. Source: doi.org/10.26099/d3dm-fa91
2. "Anaphylaxis after COVID-19 Vaccination." CDC. Source: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/adverse-events.html
3. "Interim Considerations: Preparing for the Potential Management of Anaphylaxis after COVID-19 Vaccination." CDC. Source: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinical-considerations/managing-anaphylaxis.html

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up to date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#) and [how and when people should get tested](#). Learn more about the vaccine at www.CovidVaccineWA.org.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.