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

With the ending of the federal public health emergency, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) urges pharmacies to continue to offer COVID-19 vaccines for all ages for whom the COVID-19 vaccine is recommended as allowed under existing law and rule.

This recommendation for pharmacies to continue to vaccinate all ages as per their licensing/authorization is made for several reasons:

- Because of barriers to health care access, some families may not be able to receive immunizations through a primary care provider.
- Pharmacies are well positioned to support families by increasing accessibility due to more locations, shorter travel distances, and longer business hours than many primary care facilities.
- Ongoing research continues to validate the importance of remaining up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations to reduce severe disease and hospitalization¹.

Authorization to Order and Administer Vaccines to Children

Pharmacists are allowed and encouraged to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to children. The DOH state standing orders have been rescinded due to the resolution of the Public Health Emergency on May 11, 2023. The following authorizations will permit a pharmacist to order/prescribe a vaccine for individuals under the age of 18. The following details are for informational purposes only and should not be interpreted as legal advice.

- **Authority to administer COVID-19 vaccines:** Providers authorized to administer vaccines in Washington state include pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians licensed by the Pharmacy Quality Assurance Commission. In addition, for pharmacy technician administration guidance please see [Pharmacy Quality Assurance Commission - Guidance Document](#).
- **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.

- **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 This authority will expire when the PREP Act is rescinded anticipated to be December 2024.
- **Pharmacy Collaborative Drug Therapy Agreement (CDTA):** 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 under five (5) years of age.
 - Find more information in the Washington State Pharmacy Quality Assurance Commission’s [Guidance on Collaborative Drug Therapy](#).

Training and Equipment

The training and equipment needed to administer vaccines for children aged 6 months to 5 years is similar to the training and equipment needed to administer vaccines to older children. 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](#). Resources include CDC tools, webinar recordings, frequently asked questions, and more.

Responding to Medical Emergencies and Severe Vaccine Reactions

Anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction) after any vaccination is rare. The CDC reports the rate is about 5 cases per 1 million vaccine doses administered for COVID-19 vaccinations². However, best practices for immunizations recommend those administering vaccinations 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. Having a plan to respond and knowing the equipment and supplies available while waiting for the emergency medical system to respond may save someone’s life.

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

- **Best practice tools and standardized orders for management of post vaccination reactions can be found** [Managing Vaccine Reactions - Handouts for Healthcare Professionals \(immunize.org\)](#).
- **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 are provided with the COVID-19 vaccine that includes appropriately sized needles for use with the vaccine. Guidance/information about appropriately sized needles and equipment can be found here: [Administering Vaccines: Dose, Route, Site, and Needle Size \(immunize.org\)](#).

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

The pandemic has impacted not just our health related to COVID illness, but childhood vaccinations and other routine preventive care services as well. DOH appreciates pharmacies who are providing vaccination services. More information will be coming about commercialization of COVID-19 vaccines, and we appreciate all of the work you are doing to help residents in Washington be healthier through these services.

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

Resources

- [Clinical Information for COVID-19 Vaccine Providers](#)
- [Vaccination site and needle selection guidance](#) (CDC)
- CDC product COVID-19 production information: [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines | CDC](#)
- The CDC’s [Interim Clinical Guidance for COVID-19 Vaccination](#) (CDC): includes product information, standing order templates, storage and handling and other COVID-19 vaccine information.
- [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. Mitchell R, Cayen J, Thampi N, Frenette C, Bartoskzo J, Choi KB, Comeau JL, Conly J, Ellis C, Ellison J, Embil J, Evans G, Johnston L, Johnstone J, Katz KC, Kibsey P, Lee B, Lefebvre MA, Longtin Y, McGeer A, Mertz D, Minion J, Rudnick W, Silva A, Smith SW, Srigley JA, Suh KN, Tomlinson J, Wong A, Pelude L. Trends in Severe Outcomes Among Adult and Pediatric Patients Hospitalized With COVID-19 in the Canadian Nosocomial Infection Surveillance Program, March 2020 to May 2022. JAMA Netw Open. 2023 Apr 3;6(4):e239050. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.9050. PMID: 37079304; PMCID: PMC10119741.

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

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.

