

Coronavirus vaccines: Who's first in line for immunization

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Kevin B. O'Reilly

News Editor

What's the news: Physicians, nurses and other people working in health care would be among the first Americans to get vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 under the allocation recommendations approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

The AMA commended ACIP "for their efforts to ensure equitable allocation of COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they become available," said AMA President Susan R. Bailey, MD. The AMA strongly supports the committee's interim recommendations "for phase 1a of the COVID-19 vaccine allocation process, which align with AMA's public health policy and *Code of Medical Ethics*," she said.

The AMA is represented on the committee's COVID-19 workgroup, and also serves as a liaison to ACIP.

"By first vaccinating our front-line health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities against COVID-19, we will help ensure patients continue to receive vital care during the pandemic and safeguard those who are most at risk for severe illness and death associated with COVID-19," Dr. Bailey said.

About 21 million people fall under the health care personnel category detailed in the ACIP recommendations, including those working in:

- Hospitals.
- Long-term care facilities.
- Outpatient clinics.
- Home health care.
- Pharmacies.
- Emergency medical services.
- Public health.

Also in phase 1a are people living in skilled nursing facilities, assisted living or other residential care facilities.

Learn about new AMA ethics guidance on physicians' duty to get vaccinated during a pandemic.

Why it's important: Even if all the leading vaccine candidates earn Food and Drug Administration approval, the initial supply of COVID-19 vaccine doses won't be sufficient to vaccinate the entire U.S. population.

That makes the ACIP recommendations "vital to prioritizing groups that should receive COVID-19 vaccine first to protect public health and reduce illness and death," Dr. Bailey said.

"The U.S. has a longstanding system for ensuring the safety and efficacy of vaccines," she added. "The AMA has long supported the vaccine recommendations of ACIP as the standard that physicians should follow when making decisions about vaccinating patients."

Read about why the effort to restore trust in science must begin now.

Learn more: The individual states will make their own vaccine allocation determinations, but it is expected that many will closely follow the ACIP recommendations.

The ACIP has not yet voted on a recommendation for who would get prioritized for vaccination beyond phase 1a. It is anticipated, though, that the next group to get vaccinated—phase 1b—would be "essential workers," such as those employed in:

- | Education.
- | Food and agriculture.
- | Utilities.
- | Law enforcement.
- | Corrections.
- | Fire departments.
- | Transportation.

Phase 1c may include adults with high-risk medication conditions and those 65 or older. Read more about the ACIP's Dec. 1 meeting on COVID-19 vaccines.

The "COVID-19: What Physicians Need to Know" webinar series is hosted by AMA physician leaders, and each installment offers fact-based insights from the nation's highest-ranking subject-matter experts working to protect the health of the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. The latest episode features a deep dive into the emergency use authorization process.