

CDC urges states to get more COVID-19 vaccine in doctors' offices

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What's the news: The Biden administration is encouraging states to supply more vaccines to primary care physicians' offices in a bid to address immunization inequities and better reach patients who are hesitant to get vaccinated against COVID-19. It's a move that comes as physicians are being urged to contact their patients by whatever means available and strongly recommend SARS-CoV-2 immunization.

The recently issued guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges states to significantly increase the share of vaccines allocated to primary care doctors "to promote health equity and address disparities in adult COVID-19 vaccination." The AMA has been urging the Biden administration to increase the vaccine distribution to physician offices and this is a good first step.

Read this AMA Leadership Viewpoints column by AMA President Susan R. Bailey, MD, on why it's essential to give physician offices a greater shot at vaccine supply.

Why it's important: Analysis has found that those counties with higher level of social vulnerability also had lower levels of vaccination. To help address that, the CDC recommends that at least 60% of doses distributed to medical offices be allocated to those located in the most socially vulnerable communities.

The CDC will give states a list of medical offices that should be prioritized. To speed the distribution of vaccine, CDC is instructing states to prioritize those medical offices who have already enrolled as COVID-19 vaccinators. As the situation evolves, CDC will continue to provide states with updated lists.

The Biden administration believes the supply of vaccines to physician offices will increase and they want physicians to register to become a COVID-19 vaccination provider. If you are part of a health system, reach out to your health system point of contact about whether your system is already

enrolled or would be interested in enrolling. If you are a physician in independent practice and are interested, contact your state or local immunization program.

According to the CDC, “more than 80% of adults have a medical office where they receive health care, and many people may prefer to be vaccinated in their regular doctor’s office.”

Studies have found that a doctor’s strong recommendation “is closely correlated with vaccination,” the CDC says. Meanwhile, 30% of adults now hesitant to get vaccinated against COVID-19 say they would be likelier to do so if the vaccine were offered to them “during a routine medical visit,” says the agency.

Doctors “working in community health centers and rural health clinics, who are often trusted community members, can play an especially powerful role in increasing vaccine confidence and access,” the agency says.

Meanwhile, the AMA is encouraging doctors to use the unique power of their voices to strongly recommend that their patients get vaccinated against COVID-19, especially now that the supply of vaccines is exceeding demand in many areas.

Bring up COVID-19 vaccination during visits with patients, of course—but don’t stop there. Whether it’s phone calls, letters, emails or social media posts, doctors should use every communications tool at their disposal to send the pro-vaccine message. The Department of Health and Human Services’ new Vaccines.gov website enables users to search for nearby vaccine appointments and also answers frequently asked questions.

The AMA has joined many of the biggest names in health care and corporate America for a massive national communications effort on COVID-19 vaccines to send patients this message: “It’s up to you.” All campaign efforts drive audiences to [GetVaccineAnswers.org](https://www.getvaccineanswers.org)—or [DeTiDepende.org](https://www.detiddepende.org) in Spanish—for answers to the top questions Americans have about the COVID-19 vaccines. The website’s information also is available in Chinese, Korean, Russian, Haitian Creole and Vietnamese.

The Ad Council and COVID Collaborative have made available a toolkit with tips, tools, language suggestions and key audience insights for the public health sector.

In addition, the AMA COVID-19 vaccines guide for physicians offers evidence-based messaging guidance and best practices for consideration in external communications on COVID-19 vaccine topics.

Learn more: The recent pause in the administration of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine due to extremely rare cases of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis with thrombocytopenia offers another reason to give physician offices a bigger role in the vaccine rollout. Physicians are best positioned to

explain the situation and help patients decide which vaccine to get. Read what doctors wish patients knew about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The AMA has developed frequently-asked-questions documents on COVID-19 vaccination covering safety, allocation and distribution, administration and more. There are two FAQs, one designed to answer patients' questions, and another to address physicians' COVID-19 vaccine questions.