

# Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19 Vaccinations in Northwest Illinois

These questions and answers can help if you are asked about vaccination efforts for COVID-19 at FHN or just in general. Many questions can't be answered definitively right now so it's important that we communicate that clearly and honestly while also confirming that we are committed to continuing to provide current, transparent information to our patients and the public. We will update as conditions change.

## 1. When can I get a vaccination?

That depends on which of the identified phases from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), as interpreted by your state and county, you fall into and the availability of the vaccine.

## 2. What are the phases identified by the CDC?

The phases describe groups of people based on potential vulnerability to COVID-19 and/or exposure to others who already have or may have the disease.

## 3. Who is getting it now?

The first phase to receive the vaccine nationwide is healthcare workers. It is up to states and individual county health departments to provide the vaccine – only county health departments can receive the vaccine and the number of doses is determined by the state; this is not like annual flu shot vaccines which are ordered by healthcare organizations as well as many other places who vaccinate the public, like drug stores or grocery store pharmacies. For the vaccination of first-phase healthcare workers, once a county health department receives a shipment of vaccine, they let healthcare organizations know how much is available and then the healthcare organizations themselves define which workers this includes and in what order, based on staff vulnerability and patient interactions. Because county health departments receive vaccine as it becomes available, no counties have enough initially for the whole population of the county.

## 4. Who will receive the vaccine next?

This is difficult to answer definitively as guidance from the CDC on this has changed several times already and continues to be modified. In addition, "guidance from the CDC" is just that: guidance. States and individual counties are not required to follow this guidance. Originally, the next planned phase was residents and staff of long-term care facilities like nursing

homes. However, it is still up to states and then individual county health departments to make the determination of who will be next based on the supply of vaccine that is available to them, which is not consistent across the country. No detailed schedule has been finalized as the availability of the vaccine continues to be inconsistent.

## 5. Why is vaccine availability inconsistent?

There is no really clear answer to this, as the media has reported on circumstances that vary widely throughout the country. It is best to keep current on the situation in your own county to learn when it will be available for you.

## 6. What is the availability of vaccine through northwest Illinois health departments?

This cannot be answered broadly as the amount varies. In addition, sometimes a supply is expected and then not received, which can happen for a variety of reasons including rerouting it to other areas where incidence or death rates are higher.

## 7. When will mass vaccination events be scheduled for the public at large?

There is no way to answer this now that can promise to still be accurate over the coming weeks and months, so as of now no mass public vaccination events are planned in FHN's service area. As vaccine becomes available, there will be opportunities to register for appointments for vaccinations. Please note that information being collected now by some entities in the region is not a promise of a vaccination at any particular time; in general, these queries are being conducted to help determine how many people are planning to be vaccinated as the vaccine is being rolled out. Vaccination appointments will then be offered as vaccine becomes available.

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The public is encouraged to watch all media, social as well as traditional, for updates, which will be communicated as quickly and accurately as possible. Additional information can be found at the Illinois Department of Public Health (<https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19>) and the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/>). Patience is greatly appreciated.



*We're here, for you.*

**FHN**