

Pharmacies: Please Keep Vaccinating during COVID-19 Pandemic

Pharmacies are essential vaccination providers for pregnant women and older adults at the greatest risk for vaccine-preventable illnesses. The Washington State Department of Health encourages pharmacies to continue administering vaccinations to these vulnerable populations during the novel coronavirus pandemic. Vaccinations continue to protect the most vulnerable patients from outbreaks of other diseases.

Things for pharmacies to consider:

- Risks to patients and pharmacy staff for exposure to COVID-19 when vaccinating.
- Strategies to mitigate risks with available personal protective equipment (PPE) on hand.
- Capacity for social distancing in waiting areas and lines.

Because of personal, practice, or community circumstances related to COVID-19, some pharmacies may not be able to provide all immunizations normally offered due to shortage of [recommended PPE](#). **If a pharmacy can provide only limited vaccinations, we encourage you to prioritize pregnant women and older adults who may be at higher risk of complications from COVID-19.**

Consider Ways to Safely Offer Vaccines while Protecting Customers and Staff

[COVID-19 PPE and operational safety guidance](#) has been issued by the Washington Pharmacy Quality Assurance Commission; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published [consideration for pharmacies during the pandemic](#); and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) has [issued an alert](#) to keep pharmacy workers safe. In addition to these valuable resources, the Washington State Department of Health urges you to consider these steps specific to safely continue offering immunizations in your pharmacy:

- Dedicate specific times of the day to offer vaccinations.
- Encourage patients to wait in their vehicles until they may come into the pharmacy for vaccinations.
- Update on-hold phone messages with immunization information for your location.
- Screen all staff and vaccination patients for COVID-19 symptoms.
- Continue to encourage patients to use drive-up, curbside pickup, delivery, or mailing of prescriptions when possible to limit pharmacy staff and vaccination patients' exposure.
- Continue the practice of not using waiting rooms. Encourage sick patients to stay home and not come in to the pharmacy.
- Hang signs and encourage people to [wear recommended face coverings](#) they bring from home.

Keep Vaccinating Pregnant Women on Schedule during the Pandemic

It is safe and recommended to continue giving flu and Tdap vaccinations to pregnant women during the COVID-19 outbreak. These vaccines protect them from serious diseases that can affect both them and their baby. This practice is supported by the CDC and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG).

We know clinics in many communities have had to reduce the number of routine preventive care visits they offer to adhere to social distancing guidelines. But routine adult vaccinations, including vaccinations during pregnancy, still can be given as recommended. Flu vaccine can be given at any visit during the pregnancy, and Tdap can be given between 27 and 36 weeks of gestation.

ACOG offers more information about [supporting pregnant patients during the COVID-19 outbreak](#).

Additional Resources for Pharmacies:

- [Printable posters for essential businesses](#)
- [Guidance for administering vaccines](#) when a child is sick
- [Delivery of adult preventive services, including immunizations](#) (CDC)
- [CDC coronavirus \(COVID-19\) webpage](#)
- [Washington State Department of Health coronavirus \(COVID-19\) webpage](#)
- [Washington state coronavirus response \(COVID-19\) webpage](#)

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