

What You Need to Know about the COVID-19 Vaccine

The FDA has issued emergency use authorization for the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, and Avera has begun to administer vaccine based on [South Dakota's distribution plan](#). An [expected vaccine availability timeline](#) has been published by the state. Below are resources that you can use when answering questions that you may receive about the COVID-19 vaccine:

Over the next two to three weeks, Avera will be finishing up phase 1C, which includes public health workers, dentists, and law enforcement. Clinics will then begin contacting people within phase 1D in South Dakota, starting with people who are age 80 and over, transplant patients, and patients receiving cancer and dialysis treatment. For more information about the COVID-19 vaccine and updates regarding vaccination groups, go to Avera.org/covid-vaccine.

1D Vaccine Allocation Talking Points

- Avera has been conducting vaccination clinics for different population groups according to priority groups set by the state.
- South Dakota is currently vaccinating groups [1A, B, C](#) and is [beginning to vaccinate group 1D](#). Groups 1A, B and C include Emergency Medical Services, public health workers, lab workers, law enforcement, correctional officers, dentists, home health, pharmacists, public health workers, and those in patient care.
- 1D individuals currently being vaccinated include people age 80 and over and those currently receiving care for cancer, transplant and dialysis. Avera is contacting our patients in the category to set up vaccine appointments.
- People not in these categories can visit [this site](#) for more information on the timeline.
- Avera, Sanford, Monument and other providers have divided the counties of the state of South Dakota for vaccination clinics.
- If you are receiving treatment in South Dakota but live in another state, you will need to get your vaccine in your home state.
- Avera patients in the 1D group will receive a call from Avera or they can fill out a form at Avera.org/covid-vaccine. People without internet access will be able to call 1-877-AT-AVERA.
- Please be patient. If everyone calls their clinic or the hotline, the 1D people who need vaccine will not be able to get in as easily. Everyone will have a chance, and Avera is excited to vaccinate everyone in the state – but the process of vaccinating everyone will likely take us into the summer.
- Avera asks that people watch our website at Avera.org/covid-vaccine for updates rather than emailing or calling clinics as staff are receiving numerous requests. Please be assured that we will keep the public up to date.
- Avera will also have a vaccine wait list if you visit Avera.org/covid-vaccine, choose our sign up and the category of “other” if you are not an Avera patient, and not in a tier that we are currently vaccinating.

FAQS

Q: Who is eligible for the vaccine now?

A: Avera is vaccinating groups 1A, B and C, which includes public health workers, dentists, and law enforcement. With the announcement from the state that we can move into phase 1D, Avera is compiling patient lists based on the risk factors defined by the state.

Over the next few weeks, Avera will begin contacting people within phase 1D with a focus on those most at risk:

- Dialysis patients, transplant patients, and those in active cancer treatment.
- Community members who are 80 years and older.
- Those whose who live in high risk congregate settings like independent living, group homes, homeless shelters, and inmates (most congregate settings except for college dorms).

Q: I'm in phase 1D. HOW and WHO will contact me?

A: If you are eligible based on the state's criteria, Avera will contact you to schedule an appointment. Patients with a health condition that places them at high risk for poor outcomes due to COVID may receive a phone call from the clinic. It may be a few weeks before you are contacted. Appointment availability is highly dependent on the continued production,

availability and delivery of the vaccines. Thank you for your patience as we work to administer the vaccine to the communities we serve.

Q: I'm in phase 1D. WHEN will Avera contact me?

A: It may be a few weeks before you are contacted. High-risk patients may receive a phone call from their clinic, however, most people will be notified through advertising, public relations, social media and the state and Avera websites to schedule a vaccine appointment either online or by calling 1-877-AT-AVERA. Appointment availability is highly dependent on the continued production, availability and delivery of the vaccines. Please be patient as we work to administer the vaccine and continue to monitor [avera.org/covid-vaccine](https://www.avera.org/covid-vaccine) for the latest information and appointment availability.

Q: I'm in phase 1D, but I haven't received a phone call. How do I get an appointment?

A: While some high-risk patients may be contacted directly as they become eligible for the vaccine, most people will be notified through advertising, public relations, social media and the state and Avera websites to schedule a vaccine appointment. Monitor [Avera.org/covid-vaccine](https://www.avera.org/covid-vaccine) for upcoming opportunities to schedule an appointment. You may also call the Avera COVID-19 Hotline (1-877-AT-AVERA).

Q: Why can't I get it right now?

A: There is a limited supply of the vaccines. While health care systems across the state have been charged with overseeing the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine in their areas, the state of South Dakota dictates which groups will receive the vaccine when. You can learn more about the state's distribution plan on the Department of Health's website: doh.sd.gov. For many it may be weeks or months, depending on age and risk factors. These priority groups have been set up by the state.

Q: Who decides priority for the vaccine? How do I know which group/phase I'm in?

A: The Department of Health has identified populations for initial COVID vaccination based on CDC recommendations and the state's vaccine allocation from the federal government.

The state has selected priority groups for Phase 1, which is broken down into several sub-phases. If you fit one or more of those requirements, the health care system charged with your area will notify the public when the vaccine is available to you. You can find the distribution plan on the Department of Health's website: doh.sd.gov.

Phase 2 will include all others 16 years and older. It is estimated that Phase 2 may not begin until summer.

Visit [avera.org/covid-vaccine](https://www.avera.org/covid-vaccine) for the latest information.

Q: Why can't I just make an appointment with my PCP and get the vaccine?

A: Right now there is a limited supply. Avera will be communicating with some patients when they qualify to receive the vaccine, and patients will be encouraged to set up a vaccine appointment. Most people will learn of vaccine availability through [avera.org/covid-vaccine](https://www.avera.org/covid-vaccine) and media.

Additional Resources

- [COVID-19 Vaccination Talking Points](#) – These talking points provide messaging on the vaccine that you can share with patients and the public about COVID-19 vaccination.
- [Avera.org/covid-vaccine](https://www.avera.org/covid-vaccine) – This public-facing website is a great place to go for up-to-date vaccine information, including common questions and answers.
- [South Dakota's distribution plan infographic](#)
- [State's expected vaccine availability timeline graph](#)
- [Moderna Vaccine Patient Fact Sheet](#) – Moderna provides answers to common questions about their vaccine
- [Pfizer Vaccine Patient Fact Sheet](#) – Pfizer provides answers to common questions about their vaccine.