

# West Coast Health Alliance

## Frequently Asked Questions for the Public

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Revised Sept. 29, 2025. Additional information is highlighted.

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### What is the issue?

On Aug. 27, 2025, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) limited approval for updated COVID-19 vaccines to all people 65 years and older and people under 65 years with underlying medical conditions. At the same time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has not yet issued recommendations for the updated COVID-19 vaccine – while CDC already moved COVID-19 from the list of shots recommended for all healthy kids and pregnant women to a recommendation to have a discussion with your provider about benefits versus risks of getting the shot. As a result, some providers and pharmacies were reluctant to stock updated COVID-19 vaccines. Many pharmacies who had updated stock were requiring either a prescription or an attestation of underlying medical conditions for vaccination. These delays were due to inaction by the ACIP over the summer. The ACIP recommendations in the past have formed the basis of the protocols in Oregon for pharmacists to administer vaccines. What this meant was that families were confused, providers were under pressure, pharmacies were under-resourced, and communities have been left more vulnerable.

### What is the West Coast Health Alliance?

The Governors of Oregon, California, Hawaii, and Washington have formed the West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA) as a unified regional response to concerns regarding the CDC's credibility and scientific integrity under its current leadership. The WCHA is committed to safeguarding scientific expertise and vaccine access, and leading with clarity, evidence and care so that individuals and families know their options and can access the protection they deserve.

The WCHA has developed Consensus [WCHA 2025–2026 Respiratory Virus Season Immunization Recommendations](#).

## What are the West Coast Health Alliance's COVID-19 vaccine recommendations?

The West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA) has recommended that the updated COVID-19 vaccines be available to anyone 6 months or older who wants them at no cost—just as they have been during recent respiratory seasons. The WCHA specifically recommends that the following people at increased risk for severe disease get an updated COVID vaccine:

- Children between 6–23 months of age
- Adults 65 years and older
- Anyone over 6 months who is at high risk of severe disease because they have underlying medical conditions
- Anyone who is planning for pregnancy, pregnant, postpartum, or lactating
- People with exposure to others who are at high risk
- All who choose protection

## What are the WCHA's influenza vaccine recommendations?

The WCHA endorses the ACIP's current universal recommendation for the influenza vaccine as of Sept. 17, 2025. All people 6 months of age and older should receive an updated influenza vaccine. These recommendations are unchanged from last year.

## What are the WCHA's RSV vaccine recommendations?

As of Sept. 17, 2025, the WCHA also endorses the ACIP's current recommendations for RSV immunization products:

- All infants younger than 8 months born to mothers who did not receive a maternal RSV vaccine should receive either nirsevimab or clesrovimab shortly before or during the RSV season.
- People who are 32–36 weeks pregnant from September through January should receive a maternal RSV vaccine.
- Children 8–19 months with [risk factors](#) for severe disease should receive nirsevimab for severe disease should receive nirsevimab.
- All adults 75 and older should receive a single lifetime dose of RSV vaccine.
- Adults 50–74 with [risk factors](#) for severe RSV disease should also receive a single lifetime dose of RSV vaccine.

To protect young infants, either maternal vaccination or infant immunization with nirsevimab or clesrovimab is recommended. Infants do not need both.

## **Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for infants?**

Yes. Despite misinformation claiming the vaccine is not safe, the COVID-19 vaccine remains safe for infants 6 months or older. In fact, the WCHA recommends the vaccine for all children 6–23 months of age because this population is at increased risk for severe disease, with hospitalization rates more than twice as high as adults 50–64 years.

## **Do I still need to get a prescription from my provider to get a COVID-19 vaccine at a pharmacy?**

No. Effective Sept. 17, 2025, the Oregon Board of Pharmacy has changed its rules to allow pharmacists to resume vaccinating people 7 years and older without obtaining a prescription from their provider; influenza vaccines may be administered by pharmacists to children 6 months and older. OHA encourages anyone who wants a COVID-19 vaccine to first check with the pharmacy for availability and to be patient. Please recognize that it may take pharmacies a few days to implement these new protocols. COVID-19 vaccines are also available at clinics and at a providers' office. Check with your provider on the availability of COVID-19 vaccines.

## **If I get the COVID-19 vaccine and I'm on private insurance, will it cost me anything?**

Likely, no. Oregon Health Authority has worked with the Governor's Office, the Oregon Department of Consumer & Business Services, and the Oregon Educators' Benefits Board (OEBB) and the Public Employees Benefits Board (OEBB/ PEBB) to ensure that private insurers continue to cover the cost of the COVID-19 vaccine in most situations. However, if you are on a self-insured plan offered by a private employer, you will need to confirm coverage with your employer's human resource office.

## **If I get the COVID-19 vaccine and I'm on the Oregon Health Plan (OHP)/ Medicaid, will it cost me anything?**

No. Oregon Health Authority has taken action to ensure that OHP pharmacies and providers will continue to cover the cost of the updated COVID-19 vaccines in Oregon.

## **I have heard that coadministration (getting a COVID-19 and flu vaccination together) is unsafe. Is that true?**

In an Aug. 25, 2025 memo, the FDA claimed that additional studies are needed to prove that coadministration of the COVID-19 vaccine is safe. However, years of real-world safety data involving millions of doses have guided CDC and OHA, since 2021, to recommend coadministration of the COVID-19 vaccine with other recommended vaccines. Coadministration of vaccines is considered safe and effective, and represents the standard of care among providers for both children and adults. If you have questions about coadministration, we encourage you to talk to your provider.

## Can I still get the COVID-19 vaccine if I don't fit under the WCHA's recommendations?

Yes. The updated COVID-19 vaccine is available to everyone 6 months of age and older in Oregon.

## How do I decide if I should follow the WCHA or federal recommendations for vaccination?

The WCHA recommendations are evidence-based and informed by trusted national medical organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the American Academy of Family Physicians. In developing these recommendations, the WCHA reviewed the data assembled by these trusted organizations regarding who is most likely to develop severe infection and, therefore, most likely to benefit from vaccination. If you have additional questions, we encourage you to talk with your healthcare provider to discuss which vaccinations are recommended for you.

## I don't have a regular doctor. What do I do?

If you need help finding a healthcare provider, [211 Info](#) is a good place to start. Specializing in health and social service assistance, they can be reached at [help@211info.org](mailto:help@211info.org) or by dialing 2-1-1. Language interpreters are available.

## Who can I contact if I need more help?

For vaccine-related questions, contact the Oregon Immunization Program Help Desk, Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m. PT, at 1-800-980-9431 or [VFC.help@odhsoha.oregon.gov](mailto:VFC.help@odhsoha.oregon.gov).

## What is shared clinical decision making and who can practice it?

Shared clinical decision-making (SDM) is a collaborative process in healthcare where patients and providers work together to make informed decisions about the patient's care. Providing a vaccine information statement (VIS) and answering any questions about it could be considered shared clinical decision-making. In this context, CDC defines a health care provider as anyone who provides or administers vaccines: primary care physicians, specialists, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and pharmacists.

## How can I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I don't have health insurance?

The best way is to get health coverage, if possible. You may be able to get full coverage, including for COVID-19 vaccination, through Oregon Health Plan (OHP/Medicaid).

- To apply, call 800-699-9075, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. You can also apply online via our ONE Eligibility website, or you can visit or call your local Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) office, or visit a community partner for free, in-person help.
- If you're over the income limit for OHP, consider applying for coverage through Healthcare.gov.

Otherwise, there may be several other ways to get no-cost or low-cost COVID-19 vaccines for uninsured individuals:

- Reach out to your Local Public Health Department.
- Reach out to a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) near you.
- Check with The National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics by entering your ZIP code on the home page. Call in advance to confirm they have the 2025–2026 COVID-19 vaccine in stock and whether they require appointments.
- Pfizer has a patient assistance program specifically for uninsured people.

## Why can't pharmacists vaccinate children under 7 years old for COVID-19?

Oregon law generally permits pharmacists to administer vaccines to individuals aged 7 years and older. (ORS 689.645). The law specifically allows for pharmacists to administer the flu vaccine to individuals aged 6-months or older.

Under certain circumstances, federal or state law can permit a pharmacist to vaccinate children aged 3–6. Those circumstances are not currently applicable and pharmacists in Oregon are not currently authorized to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to those under age 7.

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[community.outreach@oha.oregon.gov](mailto:community.outreach@oha.oregon.gov)



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