WHAT IS A COVID-19 VACCINE?
A vaccine is a medicine that you usually get in a shot. It protects you from getting a disease, so in this case, it protects you from getting coronavirus or COVID-19.

IS THE COVID-19 VACCINE SAFE FOR PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME?
The Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group, (whom the NDSC trusts), supports the recommendation that people with Down syndrome receive the COVID-19 vaccine. They say, “The vaccine is a safe path to which we can reduce symptomatic COVID-19, save lives, and return more rapidly to the many aspects of our lives that have been altered”

HOW WILL THE COVID-19 VACCINE HELP?
Getting the COVID-19 vaccine benefits individuals and will stop the spread of the virus in the community.
- Approved vaccines make it less likely you will get COVID-19.
- Getting vaccinated may make symptoms not as bad if you do get COVID-19.
- Getting vaccinated will help protect people around you, including older people, people with disabilities, and those with other health conditions.

CAN CHILDREN GET THE VACCINE?
The current vaccines available are not recommended for any children under the age of 16 at this point (1). There are some research sites enrolling children down to 12 years old for vaccine trials, so you may want to look for these options in your area if you are interested.
**SHOULD I WAIT UNTIL EVERYONE THAT I LIVE WITH CAN GET THE VACCINE?**

No, there is no reason to wait. There will likely continue to be a slow roll-out of the vaccines over the coming weeks to months, so not everyone in your household may be able to get the vaccinations at the same time. It is advised that those who can receive the vaccine do so as soon as possible.

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EVERYONE GETTING VACCINATING?**

- Individuals who live in group homes who have been away from family and friends will be able to reunite with them, and their support network.
- School systems will no longer require remote learning.
- Transition to adulthood programs can operate again and promote independence and supports.
- People who need therapies and support services will be able to get them again.
- Caregivers will have the help that they need.
- Businesses that have suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic will recover, creating more job opportunities for those with disabilities to find gainful employment.

**IF YOU GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE CAN YOU STOP WEARING A MASK?**

The vaccine protects the vaccinated person, but people who are vaccinated can still spread the virus to others. To protect yourself and others, the CDC encourages those vaccinated to continue to:

- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Avoid crowds.
- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces.
- Wash your hands often.

**WHO DECIDES WHEN I CAN GET THE VACCINE?**

Each state determines when the people who live there will get the vaccine. States have already started giving the vaccine, but many are still changing their distribution schedules. Contact your state’s Department of Health to see when people with Down syndrome are scheduled to get the vaccine.
HOW CAN I ADVOCATE SO THAT MY STATE MAKES ME A PRIORITY?

If people with Down syndrome in your state are not receiving priority in COVID-19 vaccine distribution, you should contact your legislators and public health officials to tell them about the CDC’s addition of people with Down syndrome to the list of those at higher risk of hospitalization or even death. You can also tell them that you need for your caregiver to also be protected.

You may also reach out to your state’s Developmental Disabilities Council, Protection & Advocacy organization, local or state Down syndrome group, or other statewide organizations that serve people with intellectual & developmental disabilities, to get information and join in their advocacy efforts.

PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDED INFORMATION

SOURCES:
- DSMIG-USA IDD COVID-19 Vaccination Position Statement
- The Autism Society of America and National Disability Organizations Encourage the Autism and I/DD Community to be Prioritized for COVID-19 Vaccination
- ScienceMag.org: COVID-19 is 10 times deadlier for people with Down syndrome, raising calls for early vaccination
- CDC: Certain Medical Conditions and Risk for Severe COVID-19 Illness
- Q&A on COVID-19 and Down Syndrome in collaboration with our national partners, Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group, GLOBAL Down Syndrome Foundation, LuMind IDSC, National Down Syndrome Society, National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia Practices.