



NATIONAL DOWN SYNDROME CONGRESS

NDSC COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ Sheet

Is COVID-19 more dangerous for people with Down syndrome? As of December 2020, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has added Down syndrome to the list of conditions at an increased risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19 (4). According to studies, people with Down syndrome – particularly those who are older, have underlying health conditions, or who live in congregate settings – are 5 times more likely to be hospitalized and 10 times more likely to die from complications of COVID-19 than the general population (2)(3). However, children with Down syndrome have similar outcomes to their peers in the general population.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine recommended for people with Down syndrome? The Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group (DSMIG), with whom NDSC has a trusted partnership, supports the recommendation that people with Down syndrome receive the COVID-19 vaccine and states, “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” (1).

Are children with Down syndrome eligible for the COVID-19 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.

How will the COVID-19 vaccine help? Distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine benefits individuals and will stop the spread of the virus in the community.

- Approved vaccines make it significantly less likely you will get COVID-19.
- Getting vaccinated may lessen the severity should you get COVID-19.
- Getting vaccinated will help protect vulnerable people around you, including the elderly, people with disabilities, and those with underlying health conditions (2).

What are the benefits of mass vaccinating?

- Individuals in group homes and congregate settings will be able to reunite with family, friends, and a support network.
- School systems will no longer require remote learning.
- Transition to adulthood programs can fully operate to promote independence and supports.
- Therapies and support services will be able to resume.
- Respite services for caregivers will be possible.
- Suffering industries would recover, creating more job opportunities for those with disabilities to find gainful employment (2).

After someone has received the COVID-19 vaccine, can they stop using safety measures? 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.

Our loved one with Down syndrome is eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, but should we wait until our entire household is eligible? 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 the timing of vaccinations for the people in your household to become eligible may vary. It is advised that those who can receive the vaccine do so as soon as possible.

Who determines vaccine priority, and how do I find out if I or someone I care for is being given priority? Each state determines its vaccine priority; contact your state's Department of Health to view the vaccine distribution schedule. Vaccine distribution has already begun, but states are still amending their distribution schedules, so it is possible to advocate for inclusion in a higher priority category.

If my state is not prioritizing people with Down syndrome in vaccine allocation, how can I advocate to change this? Your state's Department of Health can provide information on their current COVID-19 vaccination allocation plan. Some states may have separate plans at the county or local level. 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 alert them to the CDC's addition of people with Down syndrome to the list of those at increased risk of death/hospitalization and the need for caregivers also to 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 such as The Arc, which serve people with intellectual & developmental disabilities, to obtain information and join in their advocacy efforts.

SOURCES:

- (1) [IDD COVID-19 Vaccination Position Statement](#)
- (2) [The Autism Society of America and National Disability Organizations Encourage the Autism and I/DD Community to be Prioritized for COVID-19 Vaccination](#)
- (3) [COVID-19 is 10 times deadlier for people with Down syndrome, raising calls for early vaccination](#)
- (4) [Certain Medical Conditions and Risk for Severe COVID-19 Illness](#)