



**LAC DPH Advisory:
Mitigating COVID-19 Surge with COVID-19
Vaccination and Boosters;
mRNA vaccines Preferred**

December 20, 2021



*This message is intended for all healthcare providers.
Please distribute as appropriate.*

Key Messages

- COVID-19 cases are increasing in Los Angeles County as are COVID-19 related hospitalizations. The vast majority of hospitalizations are among persons who are not fully vaccinated.
- The Omicron variant is a serious threat locally and globally given its increased infectivity, potential immune evasion, and resistance to some treatments.
- Providers are urged to contact their patients and strongly encourage them to get fully vaccinated (if they are ages 5 and older) and to get their booster dose when due (if they are 16 and older) to protect them from getting seriously ill from COVID-19 and to mitigate community spread.
- The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and CDC now recommend the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines over the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson (J&J) COVID-19 vaccine for both the initial vaccine series and booster doses due to their more favorable benefit/risk balance. See [CDC media statement](#) and discussion below.

Situation

The Omicron variant now accounts for nearly three-quarters of new US cases per [CDC estimates](#). The COVID-19 vaccines remain highly effective against severe outcomes caused by Delta. Preliminary evidence suggests that COVID-19 vaccines are similarly protective against severe illness and death from Omicron infection as from Delta, but there is limited data for medically fragile persons, the elderly, and children. Booster doses have been shown to increase the immune response which provides improved protection against Delta and potentially against Omicron. Data from the [United Kingdom](#) suggest that vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic COVID-19 infection with Omicron increases significantly to 76% two weeks after a Pfizer booster dose, re-affirming the importance of boosters during this period of increasing circulation of the Omicron variant. For more information on Omicron, see:

- ACIP PowerPoint presentation [Update on Omicron](#) (Dec 16, 2021)
- CDC Science Brief: Omicron (B.1.1.529) Variant
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/scientific-brief-omicron-variant.html>
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control : [Assessment of the further](#)

[emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron VOC in the context of the ongoing Delta VOC transmission in the EU/EEA \(Dec 15, 2021\)](#)

In LA County, ~70% of people age 5 and older are fully vaccinated but wide variations in vaccination rates persist ([COVID-19 Vaccine Data Dashboard](#)). Concerns about Omicron and rising case rates provide an opportunity to encourage people to start or complete a vaccination series or, when due, to get a booster dose.

mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are preferred for primary vaccination and for booster doses

The ACIP met on December 16th to review data on the [safety and efficacy of the J&J COVID-19 vaccine](#) which showed that COVID-19 mRNA vaccines have higher effectiveness and are associated with fewer severe adverse events than the J&J COVID-19 vaccine. The J&J vaccine continues to be associated with an elevated risk of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) and Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS). In the setting of widely available mRNA COVID-19 vaccines in the US, the benefit/risk balance of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines is more favorable than for J&J COVID-19 vaccines. In light of this, the ACIP and CDC made a preferential recommendation for mRNA COVID-19 vaccines over the J&J COVID-19 vaccines for the prevention of COVID-19 for both primary vaccination and booster doses. Given the current state of the pandemic both here and around the world, the ACIP reaffirmed that receiving any vaccine is better than being unvaccinated.

If mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are contraindicated (severe allergic reaction to mRNA COVID-19 vaccine), inaccessible, or J&J COVID-19 vaccine is preferred by the patient, then the J&J COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to most patients after discussion about the risk of adverse events and when to seek medical care.

For more information, please see the CDC [Interim Clinical Considerations](#).

These recommendations have been endorsed by the [Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup](#).

Actions Requested of Providers

- Contact your patients and urge them to get fully vaccinated and boosted when due (i.e., 6 months after completing their mRNA primary series and 2 months after the single J&J series) to protect them from getting seriously ill. Offer information and access to COVID-19 vaccines.
- Preferentially offer vaccination with mRNA vaccines, unless contraindicated, over the J&J vaccine.
- Start a mRNA COVID-19 vaccine series even if there is uncertainty about how the patient will receive their second dose.
- For individuals with valid medical contraindications to mRNA vaccines and those who prefer the J&J vaccine, continue to make the J&J vaccine available. Provide these individuals with information about the vaccine risks and when to seek

- emergency medical care.
- Continue to report any suspected adverse events following receipt of any vaccine to the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System ([VAERS](#)).

Vaccines are widely available across LA County.

Visit [VaccinateLACounty.com \(VacunateLosAngeles.com – Spanish\)](#) to find a location.

Individuals can call **1-833-540-0473** if they need help making an appointment, need transportation to a vaccination site, or are homebound. Phone lines are open from 8am to 8:30pm 7 days a week. Information is also available in many languages 24/7 by calling 2-1-1.

Resources

LAC DPH Resources

- [COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Summary Table for Providers](#) - summarizes vaccine eligibility based on the primary series and patient age and/or risk factors.
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Summary Table for Patients](#)
- [VaccinateLACounty.com \(VacunateLosAngeles.com – Spanish\)](#) - hosts all COVID-19 vaccine related resources for the public.

CDC Resources

- COVID-19 vaccine [clinical considerations](#)
- CDC COCA Webinar: [Updated Guidance for Clinicians on COVID-19 Vaccines \(12-17-21\)](#)

Visit the LAC DPH [COVID-19 Provider Hub](#) and [Vaccination Hub](#)

Refresh your browser to view the latest version.

This communication was sent by Claire Jarashow, Director,
Vaccine Preventable Disease Control Program, Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health

To view this and other communications or to sign-up to receive LAHANs, please visit
ph.lacounty.gov/lahan