

Easier to Get a Vaccine

A growing number of LA County and City vaccination sites are accepting walk-ins in addition to continuing to offer vaccinations by appointment. Scrolling through myturn.ca.gov, vaccinateLACounty.com and the Kaiser non-member links showed multiple locations with same-day appointments and several accepting people without appointments. The myturn.ca.gov registration process also offers help arranging a home vaccination appointment or transportation to a vaccine site. If you have an appointment at a site that is also offering walk-in vaccination and the lines look long, ask if there is an expediter to facilitate your progress.

Over the month of May, the [Dodger Stadium](#) mass vaccination site will be winding down and many of its resources will be added to other vaccination sites. Efforts to make vaccination more easily available, especially in communities with lower rates of vaccination, will spur an increasing number of mobile, pop-up and community-based sites. More than 50% of LA County White and Asian American residents ages 16 and older have received at least one dose of vaccine compared to [only about 30%](#) of similarly aged Latino and Black residents. The County will continue to work through community outreach groups where there are high rates of unvaccinated residents, especially as the data becomes clear that protection from COVID by virtue of prior COVID illness is less effective and durable than protection by vaccination.

Changes to improve the availability and accessibility of vaccinations is being accelerated by the recent 50% drop in first dose appointments, evidence that many of the persons most ready to be vaccinated have already done so.

Why You Want that Second Dose of Pfizer or Moderna Vaccine

Nationwide, about 8% of persons who got a first dose of Pfizer or Moderna COVID vaccine have missed their [second dose appointment](#). This is not an unusual rate for multi-dose vaccines but COVID is not a “usual” problem. The rate of missed second dose appointments in [LA County](#) is a more disturbing 18%. Some may be hesitating because they are concerned about side effects, which can be more pronounced with the second dose. Some had their second dose appointments cancelled when vaccine supply was a problem. Some with a history of COVID illness may think one dose is enough. Others may be misinterpreting information about the immunity from a single dose of Pfizer or Moderna and making unproven assumptions about its strength and duration.

When thinking about side effects, remember the tendency of social media to promote an “Olympics of suffering” with each post trying to top the one before it. Fatigue, headache, muscle aches and fever are more common on average with second doses of mRNA vaccines, but they do not occur in all persons and they are transient. The US supply of these vaccines is now more plentiful, so access is a much smaller issue. Second doses are important because they induce a 10-fold higher level of neutralizing antibodies. The second dose is also important for creating and maturing the T and B cell immune responses that contribute to durability of immunity as well as protection for variant strains. Beyond the health considerations, skipping that second dose could make life more complicated if travel and other activities require proof of full vaccination.

Some other information to keep in mind about second doses:

- **It is never too late to get a second dose.** While we want you to get your second dose on time, you don’t start over if you are late – you pick up where you left off.
- **Wherever you go for your second dose, take the vaccination card from your first dose.**
 - The ideal scenario is to get your second dose from the same provider as your first.
 - More LA County sites are offering “stand alone” second doses to persons who got their first dose elsewhere.
 - Pharmacies getting vaccine from the federal government have been instructed to offer second doses to people who got their first dose elsewhere.
 - Make sure you choose a site offering the same vaccine as your first dose.
 - Lost the vaccination card? There should be an on-line immunization registry record of your dose(s). For most of California you can get a copy of your record from the California Immunization Registry using their [authorization](#) to release health information. After confirming your identity, Student Health Services can make a request on your behalf if you don’t have the ID the Registry requests.

- **Do get a second dose of Pfizer or Moderna even if you had COVID illness before or after your first dose.** You should not assume that your immune response after COVID is equivalent to a dose of vaccine. Wait to vaccinate until you are off isolation, usually the eleventh day after your symptoms started or after your test was positive if you had no symptoms.

More About Breakthrough Infection in Fully Vaccinated Persons

A fully vaccinated person is anyone at least 2 weeks out from completing COVID vaccination. When a fully vaccinated person is found to have COVID infection it is called a breakthrough infection. Breakthrough infections are seen with all vaccine-preventable diseases. The two most common issues increasing the risk of breakthrough infection are an impaired immune response in the vaccinated person and mutations in the infecting virus that shield it from the immune response.

When vaccination first began for residents and staff in nursing homes in December 2020, there was a 96% drop in COVID cases in those settings as measured by late March 2021. In a study of [75 of 78 Chicago nursing homes](#) with 627 COVID cases over that time frame, only 22 occurred in fully vaccinated residents and staff as detected by active surveillance testing. Two-thirds of those breakthrough infections were asymptomatic. The viral load was found to be low in the breakthrough infections where it was evaluated, consistent with the absence of documented transmission from the persons with breakthrough infection to others.

The CDC is continuing to collect [breakthrough infection data](#) nationwide from Public Health Department reports and the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting system. As of 4/26/21 with over 95 million fully-vaccinated persons, there have been 9,245 breakthrough infections (1 out of every 10,000 fully vaccinated persons). We know these more passive surveillance approaches will be missing some of the mild and asymptomatic cases. Following the data that is available and doing genomic sequencing in breakthrough infection cases identified will help assess ongoing immunity from vaccination and monitor for the impact of COVID variants on that immunity.

Quick Links to Resources

- If you are looking for a test because you had close contact with a suspected/confirmed case, you need to quarantine: ph.lacounty.gov/covidquarantine (instructions changed 12/17/2020)
- If you are looking for a test because you have symptoms, you need to isolate: ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation
- CDC Vaccine information in [multiple languages](#)
- Free testing in [L.A. County](#) and in [Pasadena](#)

Vaccine Availability

- All persons ages 16 and older are eligible for vaccination. Use myturn.ca.gov for availability all over California.
- Access Los Angeles vaccine providers through vaccinateLACounty.com
- Kaiser has a separate state [vaccination programs](#) open to non-members.
- Trying to help someone outside California get vaccinated? [Vaccines.gov](https://vaccines.gov) is a national level approach to connecting people to vaccine providers.
- Remember there is no cost to you for the vaccine and eligibility does not depend on health insurance, citizenship, or documentation status.

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