http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/covid-19-vaccination-16b-s5.jpg

Wisconsin leads the nation in getting available shots in arms.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), today announced everyone age 16 and over will be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine starting April 5, 2021. Wisconsin currently leads the nation in being one of the most efficient vaccinators for getting available shots in arms. With increased vaccine supply and an accelerated vaccination pace in recent weeks, the state is able to push the eligibility date four weeks earlier than expected.

"We knew all along our COVID-19 vaccination program would be a massive undertaking, and we're proud Wisconsin is currently leading the country in these efforts and that we're now able to give all Wisconsinites 16 and older the opportunity to get vaccinated," said Gov. Evers. "This marks a major milestone in our state's fight against this virus and gets us closer to overcoming this pandemic and bouncing back together. Thank you to all the folks in public health, vaccinators, and staff helping make this possible."

While everyone will be eligible starting April 5, some areas of the state may have a higher demand for vaccinations and may have waitlists. Vaccine providers will prioritize anyone previously eligible such as public-facing essential workers and people with medical conditions.

There continue to be many options available for getting vaccinated, including through DHS, federal, and local community-based vaccination clinics, pharmacies, healthcare providers, local and tribal health departments, and employers.

More information about each of these options is available on the COVID-19 where to get vaccinated page . Currently, the Pfizer vaccine is the only COVID-19 vaccine authorized for individuals age 16 and 17.

To find a local vaccine provider visit the COVID-19 vaccine provider map or visit https://vaccinefinder.org . Individuals can also call the toll-free vaccine hotline at 1-844-684-1064 with questions or help registering for a vaccination appointment. The hotline is also available in Hindi, Hmong, Somali, and Spanish.

Certain vaccine providers are using the COVID-19 Vaccine Registry . Anyone can register for an appointment using the COVID-19 vaccine registry. After you register, you will be notified when you are able to schedule an appointment. Appointments are based on whether a vaccine provider in your area uses the registry for scheduling and has available vaccine, and your place on the waitlist. Other vaccine providers may use their own scheduling system.

“We have built-up a strong network of vaccine providers across the state. Every community is different, some providers may have openings and others may have waitlists but I assure you that anyone who wants a vaccine will be able to get one in the coming weeks,” said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. “We appreciate everyone’s patience as we work to reach 80 percent community immunity in Wisconsin.”

Since the first shipment of an U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-authorized COVID-19 vaccine arrived in mid-December, Wisconsin continues to be a national leader in administering vaccine quickly and has administered over 2.7 million doses. As of March 29, more than one million people have been fully vaccinated and more than a quarter of Wisconsin residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

As more Wisconsinites get fully vaccinated and COVID-19 disease rates remain high, it is critical for everyone to continue good public health practices. Masking up, staying physically distant, washing hands, and getting tested continue to be crucial tools for protecting ourselves and our communities against COVID-19. People who are fully vaccinated can review recently released post-vaccination guidance .

For information, resources, and data related to Wisconsin’s COVID-19 vaccination program, visit the COVID-19 vaccine webpage . Make sure you are protected from COVID-19 vaccine scams with these simple tips .