

# COVID-19 BRIEFING

Updates on COVID-19 in Idaho



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH & WELFARE

Feb. 26, 2021

Welcome to the Department of Health and Welfare's bi-weekly briefing on the department's latest news, communications activities, and resources for the pandemic. New in this edition of the briefing is a statewide COVID-19 pre-registration tool in the works, new residency or work requirement for vaccine appointments, COVID-19 variants detected in Idaho, and more. New sections are marked "NEW" and all other sections are up-to-date as of the time of publishing.

NEW  
INFORMATION

## STATEWIDE COVID-19 VACCINE PRE-REGISTRATION TOOL

Due to widespread challenges accessing COVID-19 vaccine appointments, DHW is launching a new statewide pre-registration tool on March 5. Idahoans will be able to pre-register for a vaccine appointment. After Idahoans pre-register, they'll be placed on a wait list that will be shared with enrolled vaccine providers. When a provider has an open appointment, they'll reach out to eligible Idahoans who have pre-registered. The new tool is meant to eliminate the frustrating process of having to repeatedly check websites and call phone centers for appointments that aren't available. Idahoans will still have the option to call their local public health district or provider to make an appointment.

NEW  
INFORMATION

## RESIDENCY OR WORK REQUIREMENT FOR VACCINE APPOINTMENTS

Given the limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine that is available at this time and Idaho's commitment to equitable and fair access to vaccine, the state of Idaho is now requiring those seeking COVID-19 vaccines in the state to either live or work in Idaho. For more information see DHW's [press release](#).

NEW  
INFORMATION

## COVID-19 VARIANTS IN IDAHO

DHW and Central District Health (CDH) have confirmed the first known infection with the UK (B.1.1.7) variant of the virus that causes COVID-19. The individual infected is an adult female who lives in Ada County. The woman had traveled out of state earlier this month, and it is believed that she was exposed during her travels. See the [press release](#) for more information.

On Feb. 17, 2021, [Central District Health](#) reported the presence of the UK variant among wastewater samples submitted from the Boise area in late January. The tested wastewater samples also detected the presence of the California variant; however, this variant is not currently receiving national surveillance. Last week, laboratory testing identified the [South African variant](#) (B.1.351) of SARS-CoV-2, in a southwestern Idaho resident. It was the first official discovery of a variant of concern in Idaho. A second case with the South African variant has just been identified in the state, and an investigation is ongoing. With variants of public health concern emerging in Idaho, DHW will begin reporting variant counts on its data dashboard later this week.

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### IDAHO COVID-19 VACCINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CVAC)

During its most recent meeting Feb. 19, CVAC voted on additional clarifications to Group 2 and began discussions about vaccinating Group 3. Those votes are recommendations that have since been approved by Gov. Brad Little.



The committee's recommendations for clarifications to Group 2 are:

- CVAC voted against including instructors for CPR, AED, and basic life support in Group 2.1.
- CVAC voted against including Red Cross Emergency Operations Center workers in Group 2.1.
- CVAC voted to recommend Social Security administration staff who are unable to telework and are serving vulnerable populations be included in Group 2.1.
- CVAC voted against including plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters in Group 2.3.
- CVAC voted to clarify that janitorial and cleaning staff should be included in the sector in which they work.
- CVAC voted against including faculty and staff who provide face-to-face services at postsecondary settings as well as public library workers in Group 2.1.
- CVAC voted against including Bureau of Reclamation dam workers, "on-site" apartment staff, Airbnb hosts, hotel workers, and media covering the legislative session in person and other "frontline" reporters in Group 2.3.
- CVAC voted to include flight crews in Group 2.3.

Also on Friday, CVAC had a discussion about an approach for prioritizing Group 3. It considered the population groups identified by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) Phase 3, which includes people ages 16-64 years old with health conditions that make them high risk for COVID-19 and other essential workers not already covered in Idaho's Group 2. CVAC took a preliminary vote to assist with identifying the next steps for setting direction for prioritizing Group 3. CVAC agreed that an approach to using age groups to assist with prioritization is preferred.

See the [press release](#) for more information.

## JOHNSON & JOHNSON COVID-19 VACCINE

The company's COVID-19 vaccine candidate will be reviewed by the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) on Feb. 26 and then by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) on Feb. 28 and March 1.

If Johnson and Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine candidate is granted emergency use authorization as quickly as the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, then Idaho could start receiving Johnson and Johnson doses as early as the first week of March.

See [results from a phase 3 trial](#) of the drug.



# COVID-19 STATISTICS

Idaho is now receiving a total of roughly 40,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses each week.

As of Feb. 25, 119,017 people have received at least one dose of vaccine in Idaho. A total of 108,502 people have received both doses.

As of Feb. 25, there have been 170,595 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and a total of 1,850 COVID-19-related deaths in Idaho.

Over the past week, the counties seeing the highest COVID-19 infection rates in Idaho include Benewah, Madison and Bonneville. Those counties have been seeing 7-day moving average incident rates of 55.3, 55.1, and 29.6 per 100,000 people respectively.

COVID-19 statistics can be found on the [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). Case data is now updated Monday through Saturday at 5 p.m., hospitalization data is updated Monday, Wednesday, and Friday by 5 p.m. and percent positivity testing data is updated by 5 p.m. MT on Thursdays.

Also on the coronavirus website is the [COVID-19 Vaccine Data Dashboard](#). It includes COVID-19 vaccinations by county and public health district, cumulative doses administered, trend data and more. Additional data may be added in the future. The dashboard updates Monday through Saturday at 5 p.m. (not including holidays).

Also on the coronavirus website, the [COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Transparency Data dashboard](#) shows the number of COVID-19 vaccine doses that individual providers and local public health districts have been allocated and the number of doses that remain for them to administer.

## FEDERAL RETAIL PHARMACY PROGRAM FOR COVID-19 VACCINATION

As of Feb. 11, this program has sent 5,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to Idaho in addition to the state's allotment each week. Starting this week, Idaho is getting 10,000 weekly doses via the program.

The doses are sent directly to and will be administered by select Walmart and Albertson's locations. Starting this week, doses will also be sent to Cardinal Health pharmacies.

## COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION ONLINE

The [COVID-19 vaccination information web page](#) was launched to help Idahoans find information on when and where to get vaccinated and what to expect when they get to their appointment. The page is one place where all Idahoans can find out when they are eligible to receive the vaccine and where to access enrolled COVID-19 vaccine providers in their area.

The [COVID-19 vaccine section](#) on the coronavirus website is updated daily. The page includes a comprehensive COVID-19 FAQ that is updated weekly, information on how to volunteer during the pandemic, recordings of DHW's media briefings, and a schedule of meeting dates for the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) as well as Idaho's COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee (CVAC), among other resources.

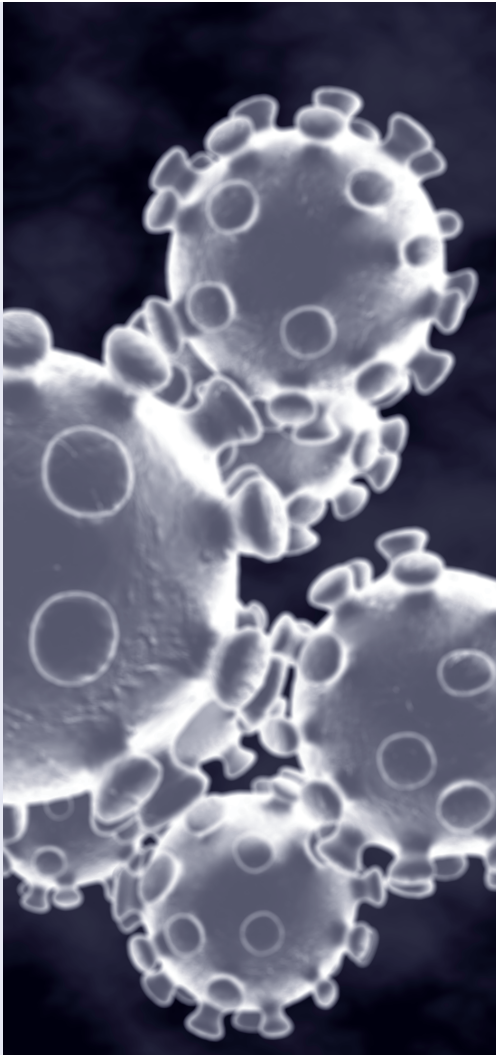
There is also a link available with [resources for COVID-19 vaccine providers](#).





### GOVERNOR'S ACTIONS

Idaho remains in Stage 3 of the Idaho Rebounds Plan. Under the Stage 3 Stay Healthy Guidelines, gatherings should be limited to 50 or fewer people, though the rule doesn't apply to political and religious expression. See the [press release](#) for more information about the move.



## BUSTING COVID-19 MYTHS

**MYTH:** The vaccine is mandatory

**FACT:** The vaccine is absolutely not mandated by local, state, or federal government, though private companies may impose vaccine requirements.

Employers considering requiring vaccination of employees should consider relevant Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and state guidance, including exemptions. However, public health officials recommend private employers consider encouraging employees to take the vaccine rather than requiring employees to take the vaccine.

**MYTH:** COVID-19 vaccines contain aborted fetal cells

**FACT:** Currently available COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any aborted fetal cells. The ingredients in those vaccines include mRNA, lipids, salts, sugars, and buffers. Buffers help maintain the stability of the pH solution. See a [list of ingredients](#).

**COVID-19  
COMMUNICATIONS  
TOOLKIT**  
Office of Communications  
January 2021

### DHW COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

DHW's [communications toolkit](#) contains social media tiles, digital posters, flyers, and videos aimed at keeping Idahoans safe from the spread of COVID-19. Recent additions to the toolkit include a flyer requesting patience as demand for COVID-19 vaccine far outpaces supply, and another reminding Idahoans there is no out of pocket cost for the vaccine.

The materials are for healthcare providers, businesses, and other interested stakeholders, and they can be branded or adapted for social media campaigns and other forms of outreach. The toolkit will be updated regularly, so check back for new content.



### DHW SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Social media campaigns remain focused on the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine in Idaho. Recent messages have targeted Idahoans frustrated with the vaccine appointment process, reminding them that DHW hears their concerns and that a statewide pre-registration tool is in the works.

Other campaigns are urging Idahoans to not let their guard down and continue following recommended precautions such as mask wearing and physical distancing, especially now that COVID-19 variants have been detected in Idaho. Posts are also communicating the latest vaccine-related statistics as well as information on how and where to get vaccinated, potential vaccine immune reactions and corrections to vaccine-related myths.

Please follow DHW on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Linked In.



### SCHOOLS

The summary of COVID-19 cases associated with schools in Idaho at the [coronavirus website](#) is published on Mondays under the [“Schools” tab](#).

### LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

The summary of COVID-19 cases associated with long-term care facilities in Idaho at the [coronavirus website](#) is published on Fridays under the [“Long-Term Care” tab](#).

### DHW WEEKLY MEDIA BRIEFINGS

DHW has hosted weekly media briefings about COVID-19 vaccine every Tuesday at 2:30 p.m. since Jan. 5. The remote events have included updates from Gov. Little and DHW officials, followed by a question-and-answer session with members of the media.

For more information about the briefings see a [press release](#). [Recordings](#) of past media briefings are posted on the coronavirus website.

### COMMUNICATIONS FORUM

DHW’s Office of Communications, in partnership with the Gov. Brad Little’s communications director, created a forum for communications professionals in state agencies, health districts, healthcare agencies and facilities, and stakeholders to meet every other Monday to discuss COVID-19-related communications efforts and strategies. The next meeting is on March. 3. If you are a communications professional and would like to join the call, send an email to [communications@dhw.idaho.gov](mailto:communications@dhw.idaho.gov).