



April 8, 2021

Ms. Heidi Ross  
National Organization for Rare Disorders  
1779 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Ross:

Thank you for your letter to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH, regarding the prioritization of people with rare diseases and their caregivers for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination. I am responding on behalf of Dr. Walensky.

As our country continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, CDC is working to ensure the health and safety of the communities we serve. While the goal has always been to offer vaccines to the entire U.S. population, identifying priority groups for COVID-19 vaccination was critical while vaccine supply was limited. As you noted, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), CDC's independent vaccine advisory committee, voted in December 2020 to recommend that people ages 16-64 with medical conditions associated with increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness be included in phase 1c of their interim recommendation for allocation of COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>1</sup> CDC adopted ACIP's recommendation, which provided guidance for jurisdictions in developing and implementing their vaccination plans.

The medical conditions<sup>2</sup> that put people at high-risk for severe COVID-19 illness represent those for which there is currently sufficient evidence to draw conclusions and make recommendations.<sup>3</sup> The risk stratification of medical conditions is being updated as the science evolves.

COVID-19 vaccines may be administered to most people with underlying medical conditions once vaccine is available to them. CDC published considerations for people with underlying medical conditions to help individuals make an informed decision about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>4</sup> Individuals with any underlying medical condition should consult with their healthcare providers regarding vaccination and other treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> Dooling K, Marin M, Wallace M, et al. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Updated Interim Recommendation for Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine — United States, December 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub: 22 December 2020. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm695152e2>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/evidence-table.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/underlying-conditions.html>

While the list of conditions that put people at high-risk for severe COVID-19 illness has been used by state health officials and other decision makers to inform vaccine eligibility during the first months of the vaccination program, many states have now opened vaccination eligibility to all adults. Each state has its own vaccination plan, but every state is expected to open vaccine eligibility to all adults by April 19, 2021.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Biden administration is taking action to expand COVID-19 vaccination sites and to ensure that 90 percent of Americans have a vaccination site within five miles of their home by April 19, 2021.<sup>6</sup>

We appreciate your letter and support as we work to fight COVID-19. CDC remains committed to protecting the American public during this pandemic. Please share a copy of this response with the co-signing organizations of your letter.

Sincerely,



Nancy Messonnier, MD  
Director  
National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/04/06/remarks-by-president-biden-marking-the-150-millionth-covid-19-vaccine-shot/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/29/fact-sheet-president-biden-announces-90-of-the-adult-u-s-population-will-be-eligible-for-vaccination-and-90-will-have-a-vaccination-site-within-5-miles-of-home-by-april-19/>