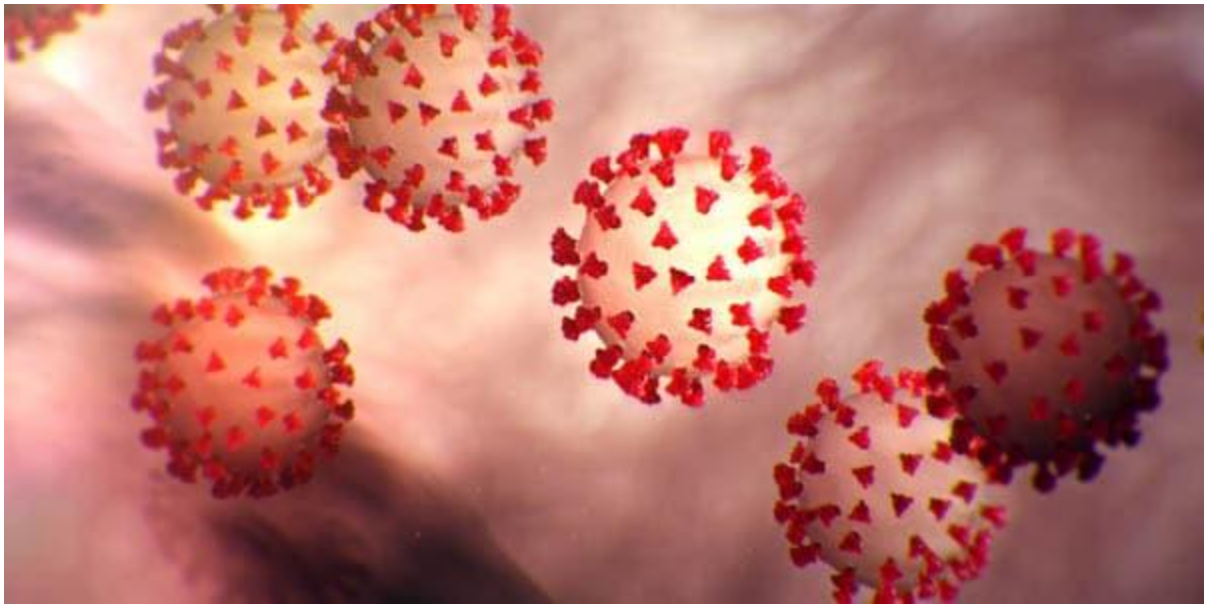
HHS Launches Bridge Access Program to Safeguard Free COVID-19 Vaccination for Uninsured and Underinsured Adults

cdc.gov/media/releases/2023/p0914-uninsured-vaccination.html



Administered through the CDC, the program is available now

Press Release

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Contact: Media Relations
(404) 639-3286

In April, HHS announced the 'HHS Bridge Access Program For COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatments Program'("Program") to maintain broad access to COVID-19 vaccines for millions of uninsured Americans. This week, the Bridge Access Program officially launches, providing continued free coverage for the estimated 25-30 million adults who would have otherwise lost access to affordable COVID-19 vaccines now that the distribution of vaccines has transitioned to the commercial market. Doses will be available in some locations this week, with distribution increasing in the coming weeks.

Administered through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the more than $1 billion program will create a unique public-private partnership to help maintain uninsured individuals' access to COVID-19 care at their local pharmacies, through existing public health infrastructure, and at their local health centers. Doses will be available in some locations this week, with distribution increasing in the coming weeks.

With the updated and authorized updated COVID-19 vaccines now recommended for use (link to CDC statement), CDC has taken steps to ensure all Americans are able to receive these vaccines at no-cost from their local provider, community health center, or pharmacy.

“We have more tools than ever to protect against serious COVID-19 disease and death, but we must make sure everyone has equitable access to those tools,” said Director Mandy Cohen, M.D., M.P.H. “This CDC program provides free COVID-19 vaccines to uninsured and underinsured adults at pharmacies, health centers and health departments around the country.”

To achieve this, CDC has leveraged an established network of state and local immunization programs to distribute updated COVID-19 vaccine through participating community-based providers, including local health departments and Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)-supported health centers. CDC has also modified existing Increasing Community Access to Testing (ICATT) program contracts with CVS, Walgreens, and eTrueNorth to offer vaccination services in areas with low vaccination coverage and access. As a result, CDC has contracted with more than 20,000 retail pharmacy locations nationwide to provide cost-free COVID-19 vaccines to people without insurance, or whose insurance requires a co-pay for in-network coverage. CDC will additionally ship and fund administration of vaccines to public health providers designated by state and local health departments – which could include more than 1,400 HRSA-supported health centers and 12,000 other vaccine providers.

The Bridge Access Program is temporary and scheduled to end in December 2024. A longer-term solution is the *Vaccines for Adults* (VFA) program, proposed in both the FY 2023 and 2024 Presidential Budgets, which would cover all recommended vaccinations at no cost for uninsured adults. This proposal has not yet been enacted into law.

COVID-19 vaccines remain free for most Americans through their health insurance plans – or through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, which provides recommended vaccines and immunizations at no cost to about half of the nation’s children. Vaccination remains the best available protection against the most severe outcomes of COVID-19, including hospitalization and death. COVID-19 vaccines also reduce the chance of having Long COVID. If you have not received a COVID-19 vaccine in the past 2 months, CDC recommends getting the updated COVID-19 vaccine to protect yourself in advance of any potential surges in virus circulation this fall and winter.

For more information on the Bridge Access Program, visit CDC’s website. Later this week, vaccines.gov will be updated with COVID-19 vaccine availability as the vaccine is distributed.

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BioNTech-Pfizer Exhibit 1213
BioNTech SE and Pfizer Inc. v. ModernaTX, Inc. IPR2023-01359
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