

COVID-19 vaccine is now available for ages 16+ with disabilities in Illinois



Starting Thursday, February 25, 2021, the Illinois Department of Public Health [expanded](#) the vaccine distribution list (called 1b+) to include Illinoisans ages 16 and older who have one of the following conditions:

- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Pulmonary Disease
- Smoking
- Heart Conditions
- Pregnancy
- Sickle Cell Disease
- Solid Organ Transplant
- Cancer
- Chronic Kidney Disease

In addition, there is *catch-all category* of anyone age 16+ with a disabling condition that is not listed above:

An individual who is, and who is expected to indefinitely continue to be, subject to any of the following five types of disabilities: physical disability, developmental disability, visual disability, hearing disability, or mental disability. 15 ILCS 335/4a.

This means students ages 16+ with autism, asthma, allergies, sickle cell anemia, muscular dystrophy, juvenile arthritis, diabetes, deafness, blindness, etc., are all currently eligible to receive the vaccine. This list of disabilities is non-exhaustive! We understand that parents/guardians will need to provide proof of their child's disability at the time of the appointment.

This expansion into category 1b+ is causing a bit of controversy due to the short vaccine supplies as of late, but this development is cause for celebration! *Hurray!* High school transition students (ages 18-21) and perhaps even some 16 and 17-year-old students with disabilities will be vaccinated soon. Keep in mind that Pfizer is the only vaccine (at least for now) that is approved for 16 and 17-year-olds. The other two approved vaccines (Moderna and Johnson & Johnson) are only approved for age 18+.

My excitement is tempered a little because not all counties in Illinois are opening vaccinations up to 1b+ just yet due to short supplies. The Biden administration announced on Friday that Chicago has been designated as a special vaccination site. Starting March 10th, the United Center will be equipped to provide 6-8k shots per day. The especially good news is that this supply of vaccines will be shipped directly from the federal government, NOT from the supply that is otherwise sent to Illinois.

Even in the darkness, we still have hope and reason to celebrate. In the immortal words of Gandhi, "the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." Well done, Illinois and IDPH.

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