



# COVID-19 in MISSISSIPPI **VACCINE GUIDE**

Your complete guide to the COVID-19 vaccine assembled by the Mississippi Today team. Visit our website for more COVID-19 vaccine resources and news.



# Welcome

Dear reader,

Since COVID-19 first reached Mississippi in March of last year, we've been here with you, trying to navigate a world that seemed to have permanently shifted on its axis. From the first case to waves of infections that pushed our hospital systems to the brink to thousands of Mississippians lost to the virus, we've never covered a public health crisis like this pandemic. The arrival of COVID-19 vaccines in record time — and with efficacy levels no one had even dreamed of when this all started — has offered us and our state a path forward. Unfortunately, the use of these vaccines has become politicized, and it's easier to find vaccine misinformation online than the truth.

That's why we wanted to create a COVID-19 Vaccine Guide, where you can find everything you need to know about the vaccines alongside the how and where of getting them in Mississippi. We've answered the most frequently asked questions about the vaccines. You'll also find information about where vaccination sites are located, transportation options and a layout of the progress Mississippi has made in the vaccine rollout.

We believe that giving Mississippians all the information they need to feel comfortable in making the decision to get vaccinated, to protect themselves and their families, is the most effective way we can help Mississippi move toward brighter days. We hope this will be a valuable resource as you navigate the continuously evolving pandemic landscape, but we want to know how it could be improved. If you don't see something you'd like to know, visit our website at [MississippiToday.org](https://MississippiToday.org). There, you'll find the most robust, comprehensive coverage of COVID-19 in Mississippi and the vaccine rollout.

If you still have questions or suggestions for us, don't hesitate to reach out. For all ways you can connect with us, visit [mississippitoday.org/connect-with-us](https://mississippitoday.org/connect-with-us).

— The Mississippi Today Team



# FAQs

## Am I eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

Mississippians as young as 12 are eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine.

## Where can I get vaccinated?

The Mississippi State Department of Health, which is managing the state's vaccine distribution, has partnered with the University of Mississippi Medical Center and opened drive-thru vaccination sites across the state. If you are qualified to receive the vaccine, you may receive your vaccine at a dedicated site listed on the MSDH website, no appointment necessary. For some locations, optional appointments are available to be scheduled online or through the state's COVID-19 hotline at 1-877-978-6453.

Hospital systems, community health centers and other healthcare providers across the state are also vaccinating patients, separate from the MSDH/UMMC partnership. Many of the providers have COVID-19 vaccine websites where you can find more information on scheduling an appointment. Visit our website to find a list of providers.

## Do I need to be a U.S. citizen or a Mississippi resident to receive a vaccine?

MSDH said it will vaccinate anyone who lives or works in the state, and that it doesn't ask for identification at its drive-thru sites with the goal of vaccinating as many people as possible.

## Do I need to get both doses at the same location?

MSDH said it prefers for people to receive both doses at the same location for logistical reasons, but that it is not necessary to do so.

## Is it safe for me to take a COVID-19 vaccine?

Numerous studies for both of the currently available vaccines have been conducted by the world's leading health experts over the last several months, and MSDH epidemiologists have studied that data. COVID-19 vaccines have been subjected to the same rigorous process for evaluating safety and effectiveness as any other vaccine approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The state's top health officials were the first Mississippians to become inoculated, and they did it in front of television cameras to assure the public that the vaccine is safe. Top elected officials of both major parties and all backgrounds, including Republican Gov. Tate Reeves, have publicly urged Mississippians to get vaccinated.

As with any vaccine, there can be some side effects. Generally speaking, data from thorough clinical trials demonstrate that "the known and potential benefits of this vaccine outweigh the known and potential harms of becoming infected with COVID-19," according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Which vaccines are available in Mississippi?

The MSDH is using all three vaccines approved for use in the United States. The Moderna and Pfizer BioNTech vaccines require two doses. The Janssen vaccine only requires one dose.

## What does the emergence of the Delta variant mean for the state's vaccination effort?

The Delta variant, which accounts for nearly all COVID-19 circulating in Mississippi currently, is believed to be about 60% more contagious than the Alpha variant and up to twice as contagious as the original strain of COVID-19.

The good news is that the COVID-19 vaccines are nearly as effective against the Delta variant as the original strain, greatly minimizing the chance of infection and nearly eliminating the risks of developing a serious illness. Studies suggest, however, that being fully vaccinated is the only adequate protection against the Delta variant, as a single shot of either of the two-dose mRNA vaccines provides only weak protection against infection. The protection the body develops on its own after a COVID-19 infection is also inadequate at preventing a Delta reinfection.

## Is the vaccine free?

It depends on where you receive it. Some vaccination providers like the University of Mississippi Medical Center, in partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Health, are offering the vaccines free of charge. However, vaccination providers can choose to charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Vaccine providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

## If I receive the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, do I need both doses for the vaccine to be fully effective?

Yes. The Moderna vaccine requires the second shot to be administered 28 days after the first dose, and the Pfizer vaccine requires a second dose 21 days later. These two types of vaccines are not interchangeable; you must receive the same kind in your second dose as you did for your first.

## Do I need to show photo ID to get the vaccine?

MSDH is not requiring anyone to show photo ID to get a vaccine at any of their drive-thru sites. This policy is in place to remove barriers for people who might not have photo ID or undocumented people. In isolated incidents, people have been asked to show ID due to confusion at the local level, but MSDH has corrected this behavior whenever it's been reported. Private clinics and federal partners (Walgreens, Walmart, etc...) often require photo ID.

## I'm pregnant. Can I take the vaccine?

The MSDH says, "Pregnant women and lactating women and those who are immunocompromised may take the vaccine; however, consultation with your health care provider is recommended."

The CDC notes there is limited data about the safety of COVID vaccines for pregnant women, though "...experts believe they are unlikely to pose a specific risk for people who are pregnant. However, the actual risks of mRNA vaccines to the pregnant person and her fetus are unknown because these vaccines have not been studied in pregnant women."

## I've already had COVID-19. Can I get the vaccine?

Yes. If you are out of your isolation period — 10 days after the onset of symptoms or 10 days after the test was done if you have no symptoms — and you no longer have symptoms or they have significantly subsided, you can get the vaccine if it is available to you.

## Can I still spread the virus after being vaccinated?

According to the CDC: "It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity (protection against the virus that causes COVID-19) after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and still get sick."

## Once I get the vaccine, can I return to life as normal?

The Mississippi State Department of Health encourages people who receive the vaccine to continue following public safety guidelines, such as wearing a mask and social distancing.

## Am I going to need a third booster shot?

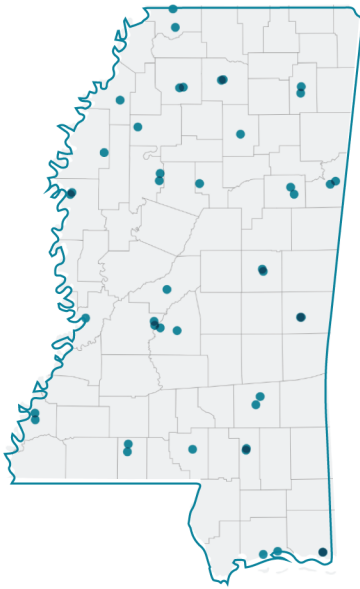
Most people should not expect to need a third vaccine dose anytime soon. Pfizer recently announced that it will seek emergency FDA authorization for a third booster shot that better protects against the Delta variant. After that announcement, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the FDA issued a rare joint statement emphasizing that fully vaccinated Americans do not need a booster shot at this time.

The situation is different for a rare subgroup of immunocompromised people, who may need a third dose to generate the antibody levels most patients see after two doses. Mississippi's State Health Officer, Dr. Thomas Dobbs, is already recommending that immunocompromised Mississippians get tested to check their antibody levels after getting vaccinated, and ask their doctors about getting a third dose if their immune system did not respond strongly to the first two doses.

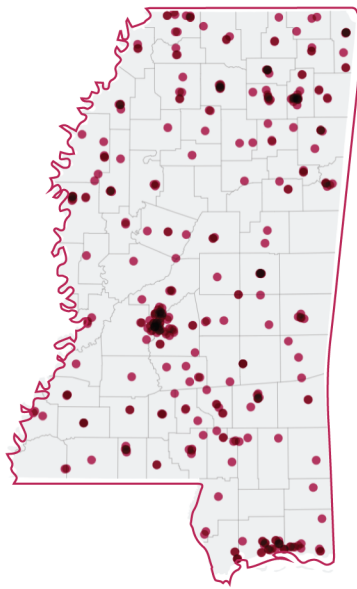
# Vaccine Locations

Below are maps of where COVID-19 vaccines are being offered in Mississippi by the different available providers, including Mississippi State Department of Health drive-thru sites, hospitals and other private partners, and Walmart pharmacy locations offering the vaccine.

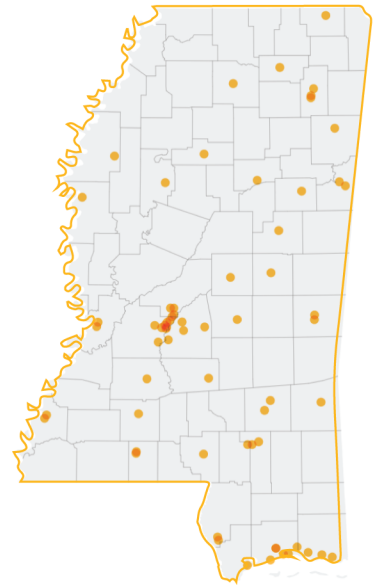
State Health Department



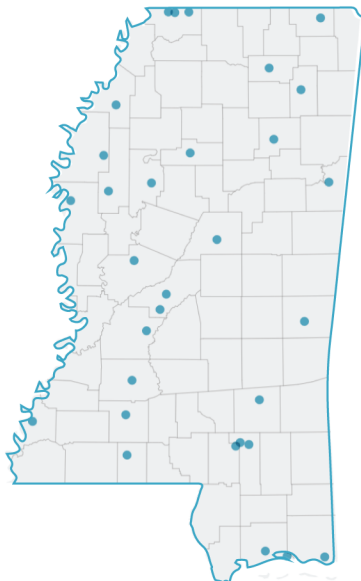
Hospitals & Local Partners



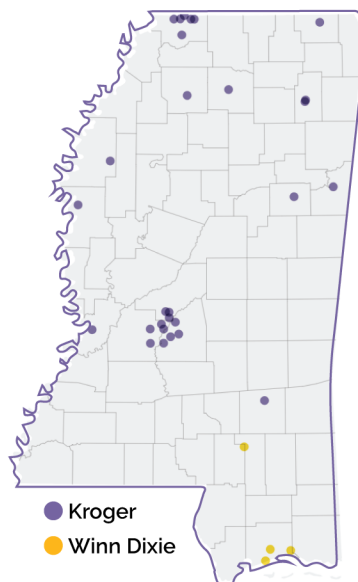
Walgreens



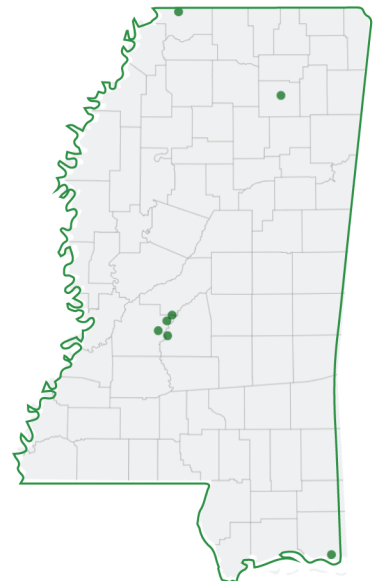
WalMart Pharmacy



Kroger & Winn Dixie



CVS Pharmacy



# Do you need a free ride to get your COVID-19 vaccination? Here's who to call.

## The Vaccination Transportation Initiative

**Phone Number:** 214-302-9445

**Who it serves:** Anyone in the Delta

**How it works:** After you make an appointment to get vaccinated, call this number to arrange your ride. Give them 24 hours notice before you need the ride. They will come pick you up, take you to get your vaccine, and bring you home afterward.

## Mississippi Valley State University

**Phone Number:** 662-254-3348

**Who it serves:** Anyone in Leflore, Sunflower, Washington, Holmes, Humphreys, Carroll, Tallahatchie or Grenada counties.

**How it works:** After you make an appointment to get vaccinated, call this number to arrange your ride. Give them 24 hours notice before you need the ride. A MSVU transportation bus will come pick you up, take you to get your vaccine, and bring you home afterward.

## Mississippi Department of Transportation

**Phone Number:** 1-866-813-3616

**Who it serves:** Anyone in Mississippi

**How it works:** When contacting the toll-free number, the caller will be able to select their scheduled vaccination site from a menu of six options: Delta Area, Golden Triangle Area, Northeast Area, Central Area, Southern Area and Southwest Area. Once the region is selected, the caller will be connected to the designated call center for the ride to be scheduled within 24-48 hours. For evening and weekend calls, every effort will be made to confirm scheduled trips by the next business day.

*Want to stay updated about COVID-19 vaccination news in Mississippi? Text "Vaccine" to 1-844-626-5588 to receive news updates powered by Mississippi Today.*

# Vaccine Myths

Dr. Dan Edney, Chief Medical Director for the Mississippi State Department of Health, sat down with Mississippi Today to bust some common vaccine myths. Watch the full video or read the full transcript on [mississippitoday.org](https://mississippitoday.org).

## Will the vaccine alter my DNA?



“The way both vaccines work had nothing to do with DNA. DNA is found in the nucleus of the cell and everything that's being done with the vaccines is in the cytoplasm, which is part of the cell that's around the nucleus.

That's where RNA is, and RNA simply is the coding for cells to produce proteins. And we need these cells to produce proteins, to attack the COVID virus. So the two type of vaccines introduced that code into the cytoplasm of our lymphocytes. They see the code and start producing anti-COVID proteins. Should you get COVID, your immune system recognizes that and starts attacking it in a healthy way instead.

If you're not immune and you get COVID, naturally your immune system may go out of control. So, the vaccine does not affect DNA in any way. In fact, we wish we could affect DNA for diseases like cystic fibrosis. And muscular dystrophy, but we can't yet, but this vaccine has nothing to do with DNA.

## Does the vaccine have dangerous or long-term side effects?



“These vaccines have never been used widespread with the technology that we're using. So it's understandable people can be hesitant about it. Vaccine reactions virtually always occurred within two weeks. If you look at all the data with all the vaccines that we have produced and mass deployed, the vaccine reactions are within two weeks and that's also what's happening with our three vaccines that are FDA, EUA approved. And so we're not seeing long-term side effects. And we now have over a year experience when you go back and look at those who are in the clinical trials. I've been vaccinated since December and have had no issues whatsoever.

What does have long term side effects is COVID and you may have heard about long COVID or what we call COVID long haulers. We don't talk about that very much. These are people who survive COVID, but who may never recover and are fully disabled because of their infection.

## Will the vaccine give me a dangerous blood clot?



“So, back in April, the Johnson and Johnson single shot vaccine was identified to clearly be causing a very strange type of blood clot in young women. And we call this entity vaccine induced thrombotic thrombocytopenia.

It is where the vaccine is causing an abnormal antibody to be produced that causes these blood clots to happen. This is very rare. It's less than seven per million doses that are administered. If you look at things like oral contraceptives, the risk of blood clots with birth control pills is sky high compared to the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, but Moderna and Pfizer have shown no issues with blood clots and, also, the Johnson & Johnson single shot vaccine has not shown to be an issue with blood clots at all in those over 50.

So, a reasonable strategy is if you're over 50 and you want the single shot — get it. If you're a younger female, and you don't want any risk of blood clots, then go with Moderna or Pfizer. Even young women who choose to get Johnson & Johnson are at exceedingly low risk of getting blood clots from the COVID vaccine.

However, if you get COVID, the risk of blood clots is extremely high from the virus itself.

## Are young women on birth control at a higher risk of getting blood clots?



“We have not seen that. We specifically looked at that because we were concerned.

Based on that age group, that it was interaction with oral contraceptives and it wasn't, this is an independent vaccine and this clearly is a vaccine reaction. Thankfully, it's very, very rare. One thing people need to know is no other vaccine has ever been monitored to the extent that these vaccines are, and so much so that our vaccine reactions surveillance was able to pick up the signal for those blood clots, even though it was seven per million. So, we are intensely watching for any other reactions and thus far, the only two that we're seeing are anaphylaxis, which are allergic reactions to shots that anybody can have, and VITT syndrome.

## Do only vulnerable people need the vaccine?



“Well, unfortunately we're all vulnerable. There's no one who can say they are not vulnerable to COVID. We have lost patients of all age groups, including children and adolescents. We routinely will have pediatric patients in ICU, in our state, thankfully not big numbers, but we do see that.

It's not that we've lost kids. You know, with chronic illnesses, we've lost children that were otherwise healthy. We've lost people in every age group that were otherwise healthy and who should be alive today. If you are vulnerable, such as over 65 or having any chronic long-term medical problems, and you're more vulnerable than the general population, you should absolutely be vaccinated.

As I'm talking to groups, you know, you care about yourself, you care about your family, but you care about your community too. Getting vaccinated is a way to help demonstrate your care and concern for your community because you're reducing the risk of giving COVID to someone that is very vulnerable.

## Will the vaccine affect my fertility?



“Another common question. This has been looked at rigorously, but mainly because the questions started coming up. And so, all the back data was looked at and data going forward is being looked at, and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology has stated unequivocally that there are no impact whatsoever on fertility. Definitely don't use it as contraception because it won't work. This was something of concern, but it's been proven to be false, and women do not need to worry about fertility issues.

## Was the vaccine development a rushed process?



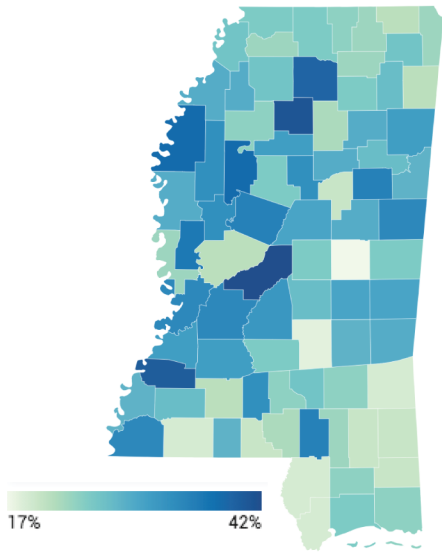
“Typically, I tell folks when we're developing new medications or vaccines, the research labs are working 9 to 5, Monday through Friday and off for holidays, but with Operation Warp Speed, it was all hands on deck around the clock — 24/7, 365 days. So, the amount of lab time was significantly higher, and we have never invested the amount of monetary resources into a vaccine development as we have with this.

What we were concerned about as physicians a year ago was would it work. The other thing people don't realize is we've been studying messenger RNA viral vaccine research for a decade. With the amount of money that was invested, we were able to take that research off the shelf, invest the amount of resources we needed, and develop not one but three vaccines that were highly effective. Moderna and Pfizer are safe and 95% effective. Johnson & Johnson is more in the 80% range, safe and effective.

If the vaccines had come out of it 50% effective, we'd have been excited. So to have vaccines that are 95% effective and safe and free and widely available, is just incredible. There's been a tremendous amount of work. This was not a rush. The FDA has looked at all the data from all the clinical trials and felt it was safe for general deployment under emergency use authorization, which means it can be given. Legally people have to understand it's not fully approved because the FDA needs more data, but that data really is there and has been submitted, and we expect full FDA approval within a matter of weeks.



# Vaccine Progress

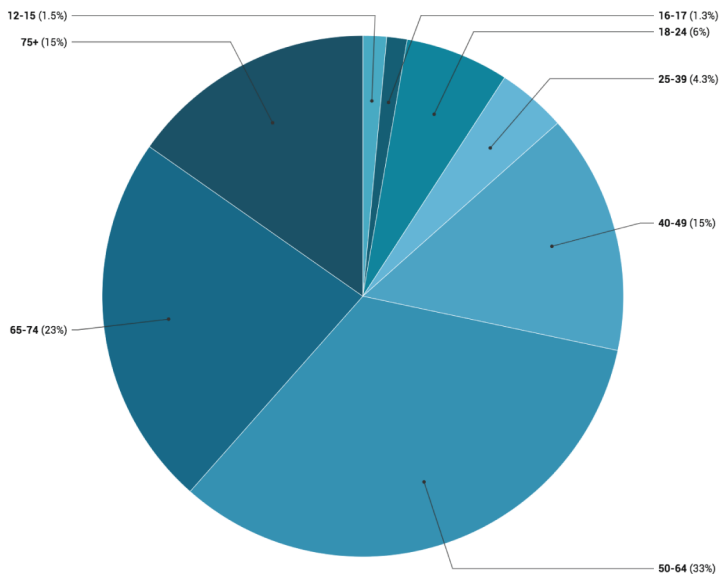
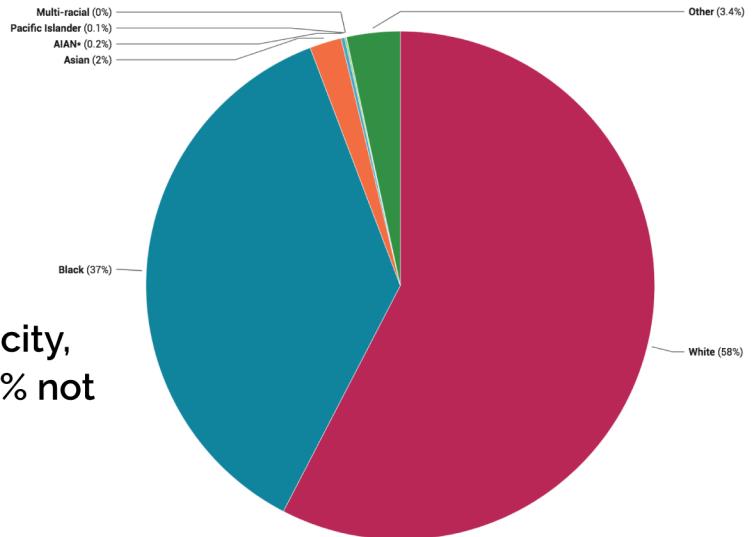


## Vaccinations by County

This map displays the percentage of fully vaccinated Mississippians in each county as of the beginning of June 2021. Madison County is the highest percent fully vaccinated at 42% and Neshoba County is the lowest at 19%.

## Vaccinations by Race

Demonstrated to the right is the percentage of fully vaccinated Mississippians by race as of the beginning of June 2021. By ethnicity, 2% of recipients are Hispanic, 90% not Hispanic, and 9% unknown.

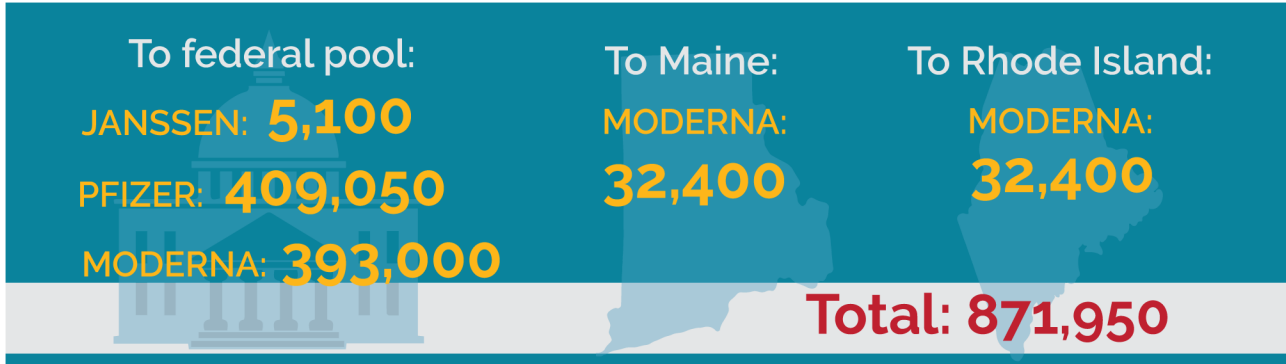


## Vaccinations by Age

Demonstrated to the left is the percentage of fully vaccinated Mississippians by age group as of the beginning of June 2021. The age of 5% of recipients are unknown and were excluded by MSDH.

# Vaccine News

Due to the low demand for COVID-19 vaccines in Mississippi, the state has returned 871,950 of the doses it was allocated to the federal vaccine pool, sent them to other states or rejected the federal allotment. Here's where they went:



## In the Headlines

### Teachers union calls on Reeves to mandate masks in schools

The state's teachers union is calling on Gov. Tate Reeves to mandate masks in schools in the fall.



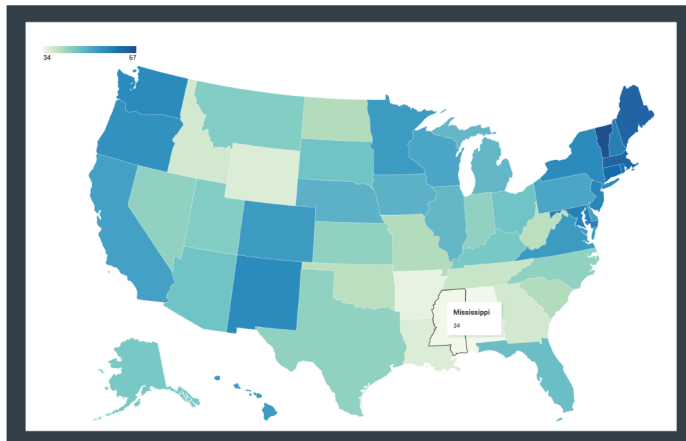
### State releases COVID-19 guidelines for K-12 school year

MSDH on Friday released COVID-19 guidelines for K-12 schools for next school year, including recommendations for masks for unvaccinated students, teachers and staff and social distancing of 3 feet when possible.

Find full vaccine coverage at [mississippitoday.org/covid-19-vaccine-guide](https://mississippitoday.org/covid-19-vaccine-guide)

## How does Mississippi stack up?

Percentage of population that's fully vaccinated against COVID-19



## What are Mississippians saying?

MISSISSIPPI TODAY We report to you.

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**MISSISSIPPI TODAY SPEAKS**

Episode One: Vaccination Experiences in Mississippi

*Want updates on COVID-19 vaccine news in Mississippi?*

**Text “VACCINE” to 844-626-5588.**



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