



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Joint Statement of the Bay Area Health Officers**

### ***COVID-19 vaccine will be distributed following federal, state framework***

As Bay Area nurses, doctors and other healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients receive the first, small batches of a rigorously tested vaccine, the region's Health Officers see hope: we now have a critical tool to help fight this pandemic.

These vaccinations in acute care hospital settings follow a federal and state framework adopted locally that will also soon protect those living in skilled nursing facilities, settings where elderly, vulnerable members of our communities are more likely to have severe illness and die from COVID-19.

As vaccine supplies grow to eventually include other groups, the Bay Area's Health Officers and state and federal officials believe these safe and effective vaccines will work in tandem with the daily habits and essential public health work that will ultimately end the pandemic.

Those [key steps to fight the pandemic](#) include public health work to protect high-risk groups and health care workers, identifying and isolating cases, and also tracing and quarantining contacts. For the public that means wearing face coverings, avoiding gatherings, postponing travel, and staying home whenever possible.

"With vaccines for the general public still months away, please avoid social gatherings – the most common source of infections into households," said San Mateo County Health Officer Dr. Scott Morrow. "The virus is transmissible without and before any symptoms. Please, no gatherings outside of immediate households, use face masks and, if you know or think you have been exposed to the virus, isolate yourself immediately even if you have no symptoms."

The 12 health officers for the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sonoma and the City of Berkeley support [the state's vaccine distribution guidelines](#), which now prioritize healthcare workers in acute care facilities. Each jurisdiction will use that roadmap to implement the distribution of vaccines in this first phase, which may take several months as supplies increase. Vaccines for the general public may be available by early summer.



All of the region's health officers plan to take the vaccine when the opportunity comes.

These early doses of COVID-19 vaccine come amidst an unprecedented surge of cases regionally and statewide. As hospitals' intensive care units near capacity, stay at home orders are either in place or anticipated soon throughout the region.

Staying home saves lives.

"In this darkest hour, the vaccine gives us a beacon to show the direction we're headed," said Dr. Lisa B. Hernandez, Health Officer for the City of Berkeley. "The actions and daily habits we each take increase the light on that path and improve safety for all."

"This first batch of vaccine will protect those at critical risk of infection and give promise to our future," said Dr. Karen Relucio, Napa County Health Officer. "As we await increasing vaccine supply, letting our guard down too soon is dangerous. Smart choices and healthy daily habits for the pandemic are critical to protecting the rest of us."

**Learn more about the state's guidelines for the first phase:**

[California Department of Public Health: COVID-19 Vaccine Phase 1A distribution guidelines](#)

**Learn about San Mateo County's COVID-19 vaccination program:**

<https://www.smchealth.org/covid-19-vaccination>