

NEWS

For Immediate Release

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Availability of monoclonal antibody treatment expands in the Treasure Valley; vaccines continue to be best defense against COVID-19

CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH (Idaho) — As COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to decline across Idaho, Central District Health (CDH) recommends the COVID-19 vaccine as the best defense against contracting, spreading, and becoming seriously ill from the virus. [Anyone aged 5 years or older is now eligible](#) for the COVID-19 vaccine, with full protection reached two weeks after the final dose in a vaccine series is administered.

While the vaccine continues to be the most effective method for preventing [hospitalizations from COVID-19](#), more Idahoans now have access to a promising treatment for those who have tested positive for the virus and are at risk for developing serious illness. [Monoclonal antibody \(mAb\) treatment](#) has been shown to significantly reduce hospitalization and death from COVID-19 if administered within 10 days of symptom onset to those who are considered at high risk for developing severe illness. “The treatment can also be used as post-exposure prophylaxis after exposure to COVID-19 in people who are at risk of severe progression of the illness,” says CDH Medical Director Dr. Sandy Mudge.

Direct COVID Care (DCC) is a new treatment facility that opened in early November in Boise, making the monoclonal antibody treatments more widely available to Treasure Valley residents. The center can treat up to 100 patients per week. This includes pediatric and adult COVID-19 patients aged 12 years and older from across southwest Idaho and surrounding areas.

Dr. Ryan Williams, Medical Director of the DCC facility, says this treatment benefits both COVID-19 patients and those on the front line of the pandemic. “Reducing the disease burden with the number of COVID-associated hospitalizations in our community is the key to moving out of Crisis Standards of Care,” says Dr. Williams. “[It] will benefit our entire community by allowing a return to normalcy in access to subspecialty care and elective procedures.”

The mAb treatment center is operated by DCC under a contract with the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare. **A provider referral is required to receive treatment.** Those without a primary care provider are urged to contact Direct COVID Care at 208-850-7886 (call or text) or via email at directcovidcare@gmail.com.

What are monoclonal antibodies?

- *Antibodies* are what our bodies use to fight off infection and can provide protection against getting a particular disease again (immunity). They occur naturally in the human body.
- *Monoclonal antibodies* are antibodies developed in a laboratory to help our bodies fight infection.
- Nearly 100 types of monoclonal antibodies are [FDA-approved](#) to treat health conditions like cancer and autoimmune diseases.

Who qualifies for monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19?

- People 12 years of age and older who have been diagnosed with and tested positive for COVID-19 within 10 days of symptom onset.
- People 12 years of age and older who are at risk of progressing to severe disease or hospitalization due to COVID-19.
 - Risk factors may include but are not limited to: 64 years of age or older; obesity; pregnancy; chronic kidney disease; diabetes; chronic lung disease; immunosuppressive disease; cardiovascular disease.

What is the cost of this treatment, and how is it ordered and given?

- The treatment is free regardless of insurance status with no patient out-of-pocket costs.
- Treatment is ordered by a licensed provider (*a provider referral is **required** to get mAb treatment*).
- The antibodies are delivered in one of two ways:
 - **SQ Injections:** Four subcutaneous injections given over the course of 5 to 10 minutes, followed by a 1-hour observation period.
 - **IV infusion:** Infusion given over 20 minutes, followed by a 1-hour observation period.

Is this treatment approved by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA)?

- Monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19 is not currently FDA-approved but has been granted [Emergency Use Authorization \(EUA\) from the FDA](#) after a phase 3 clinical trial showed it is safe and effective.
- The clinical trial showed a 70% reduction in hospitalization/death among those who received the treatment.

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Additional Resources

- CDH COVID-19 Call Center: 208-321-2222 – Open M-F, 9am to 3pm
- COVID-19 vaccine resources and locations: cdh.idaho.gov/covid-vaccine.php

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