COVID-19 and Herd Immunity

What is Herd Immunity?

Herd immunity is when a large portion of the population becomes immune to a disease, making the spread of disease from person to person much less likely. Because the disease cannot spread, the whole population becomes protected—not just those who are immune.

How is Herd Immunity Achieved?

There are two possible ways to achieve herd immunity for COVID-19—vaccines and infection. COVID-19 vaccination is an ideal approach to achieve herd immunity. All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing serious illness from COVID-19 and are an important tool to help end the pandemic.

Getting COVID-19 may offer some natural protection. Current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. However, experts don't know for sure how long this protection lasts, and the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural protection.

When Can We Achieve Herd Immunity?

The percentage of people who need to be vaccinated in order to achieve herd immunity varies by disease. For example, herd immunity against measles, which is easily spread from person to person, requires about 95% of a population to be vaccinated; for polio, the vaccination rate needed is about 80%.

To safely achieve herd immunity against COVID-19, a substantial proportion of a population needs to be vaccinated to reduce the virus spread in the whole population. At this time, the exact proportion of the population that must be vaccinated against COVID-19 for herd immunity is not known.

If enough people are immune to COVID-19 through vaccination or natural immunity, the virus has fewer pathways to spread.

No herd immunity | Herd immunity achieved

● Susceptible   ● Infected   ● Immune   → Disease transmission
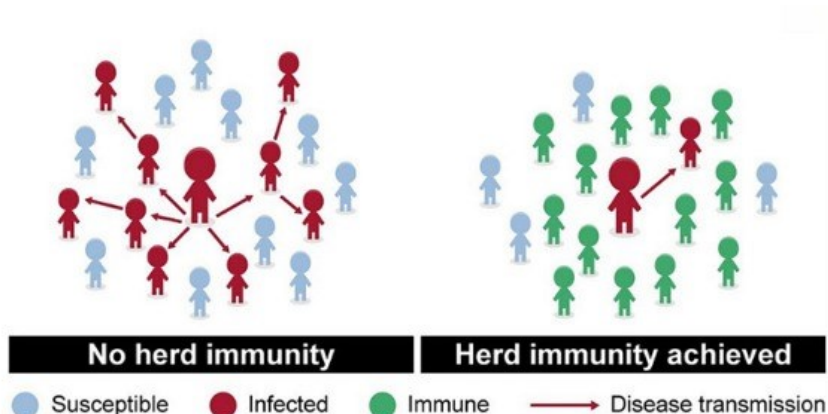
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Herd Immunity and the Maryland COVID-19 Vaccination Plan

Maryland is distributing the vaccines to Marylanders based on relative risk of exposure or developing serious illness.

Individuals included in earlier priority groups will be given priority to be vaccinated.

To schedule a vaccination appointment, please visit covidvax.maryland.gov, the one-stop shop to finding providers in your area, or call the state's COVID-19 vaccination support center at 1-855-MD-GOVAX (1-855-634-6829).

WE ARE IN PHASE 3: ALL MARYLANDERS 16+ ARE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE THE VACCINE

1A
1B
1C
2A
2B
2C
3
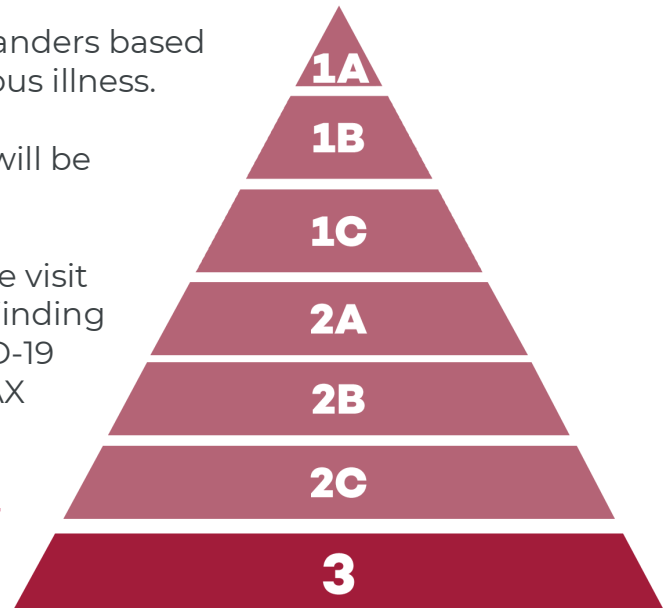
How Can We Slow the Spread of COVID-19?

It is important for everyone to continue using **all the tools** available to offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.

- Get tested—visit **covidtest.maryland.gov** to find a testing site near you
- Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth
- Wash your hands often
- Avoid large gatherings
- Practice social distance in public—keep at least six feet between yourself and others
- Get vaccinated when you are eligible to receive the vaccine