

COVID Vaccine FAQ's

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COVID-19, also called coronavirus, is making people sick around the world. In addition to wearing masks, keeping 6 feet apart and washing our hands, vaccines are important tools to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Vaccines help your body fight off the virus and keep you from getting sick. The more people who get vaccinated, the faster we can end the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are some frequently asked questions about COVID-19 vaccines:

Which vaccines are currently approved?

There are currently two COVID-19 vaccines that have been approved by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA):

- [Pfizer](#)'s vaccine was approved for emergency use by the FDA on Friday, December 11, 2020. Over 43,000 participants took part in their trial, which showed it is 95% effective in preventing the virus and serious illness. There were no serious illnesses or deaths in trial participants who received the vaccine.
- [Moderna](#)'s vaccine was approved for emergency use by the FDA on December 18, 2020. Over 30,000 participants took part in their vaccine trial, which shows the vaccine is 94.5% effective in preventing the virus or serious illness. There were no serious illnesses or deaths in trial participants who received the vaccine.

How do the vaccines work?

COVID-19 vaccines will not give you the disease. Vaccines make your body think you have the disease without actually getting it. The immune system, the part of your body that fights sickness, responds to the vaccine by creating antibodies. Antibodies are disease-specific proteins that fight off the virus when they see it. The vaccines currently available use mRNA technology, which does not affect or interact with a person's DNA.

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use messenger RNA (mRNA), **These vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19.**

This newer technology has been around for about 20 years and is easier to make than traditional vaccines, but has not been used in widespread human vaccines before now.

The vaccines were developed so quickly, how do I know it is safe?

Actually the science of this virus has been around for years. The mRNA vaccine approach was invented in the 1990's. One distinct advantage of the mRNA vaccine approach is that it allows for speed of design and production. The COVID-19 vaccine was also "fast tracked" in that it

has been able to jump ahead of other medications waiting line for approval. The urgency of making this vaccine has also meant that there have been investments made that have allowed processes that usually happen in sequence, to happen simultaneously. And finally, the fact that COVID is so widespread has meant that many more people have been able to be involved in the trials in a short time. As many as 43,548 people were in the trial for the Pfizer vaccine alone. This has enabled us to see very quickly if the vaccine works.

What should I expect the vaccination process to be like?

We understand that many people are afraid of needles – we don't much like them either. Fortunately, the diameter of the COVID vaccine needle is smaller than what you would normally see from a flu vaccination, so initial reports are that it may be less painful.

In order to ensure that people getting vaccinated do not have an adverse reaction, you will need to remain at the vaccination site for 15 or 30 minutes after you've received each dose.

Lastly, you should receive documentation of the vaccination. You'll need to have the documentation from the first shot with you when you get the second shot.

Can I still transmit the virus to others once I get the vaccine?

This is unknown at this time, which is why you'll still need to follow all protocols after getting the vaccine.

Where are the vaccines made?

The Pfizer vaccine is being manufactured in Missouri, Michigan, and Massachusetts. For more details on their manufacturing, click [here](#).

The Moderna vaccine is being manufactured in Massachusetts.

Who will receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Initial supplies of the vaccines will be limited so not everyone will be able to be vaccinated right away. Priority is given to people at highest risk for infection including healthcare workers and those in long term care facilities.

Vermont has opened up vaccination to those 75 years or older as of January 25. See below for more info on this process.

How is the COVID-19 vaccination given?

COVID-19 [mRNA vaccines](#) (such as the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines) are given in two doses, injected into the muscles of the upper arm, similar to a flu shot.

How many shots will I need?

For both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, two shots are required.

- The Pfizer vaccine requires two shots, 21 days apart.
- The Moderna vaccine requires two shots, 28 days apart.

The first shot starts to build immunity, but it is not enough for protection. The second shot is needed to receive the most protection from the vaccine.

It is not known at this time whether a booster shot will be required at some point in the future (similar to some other vaccines). The flu vaccine is an annual shot due to the many different strains of that virus.

Does the second dose have to be the same vaccine as the first dose?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccines are not interchangeable. The second dose must be from the same manufacturer as the first dose.

I understand the Pfizer vaccine is super frozen. Won't that hurt my arm when I am vaccinated?

Yes, the Pfizer vaccine is super frozen (-70C), but it is thawed to room temperature before you receive the vaccination.

Will either vaccine cause symptoms?

Some participants in clinical trials for both vaccines showed a strong immune response leading to side effects. For both vaccines, the second dose may cause a stronger immune response than the first dose, which can mean more side effects. This is normal and is how your body learns to fight COVID-19. The four most common side effects were pain at the injection site, fatigue, headache, and muscle pain. They should go away in a few days. A few people have had an allergic reaction to the vaccine, but this is very rare.

What if I have an adverse event?

If you believe you are having a serious reaction, you should immediately contact your health care provider and seek medical attention. Adverse events following vaccination should be reported through the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) (1-800-822-7967) or through their website: <https://vaers.hhs.gov>.

The CDC is implementing a new smartphone-based tool called v-safe to check-in with people about side effects after they receive a COVID-19 vaccine. When you receive your vaccine, you should also receive a v-safe information sheet telling you how to enroll in v-safe. If you enroll,

you will receive regular text messages directing you to surveys where you can report any problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving the vaccine.

What is V-Safe?

[V-safe](#) is a new CDC smart-phone based monitoring program for COVID-19 vaccine safety. Everyone who receives the COVID-19 vaccine will be encouraged to enroll in this online program. The system conducts daily health checks after vaccination for the first week, and then weekly for 6 weeks, followed by quarterly check-ins. The system collects data on side effects as well as any major health impacts. If you don't have a smartphone, it's ok not to enroll in this program.

How will the vaccines be distributed?

- Once a vaccine is approved for emergency use, the FDA will provide an authorization letter and fact sheet to the State. The fact sheets for both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are provided below.
- Vermont expects to receive a weekly shipment of its allocation (based on population) of any approved vaccines.
- The first allotments of vaccines have been distributed to health care workers as well as staff and residents of long term care facilities as part of Phase IA.
- Phase II began on January 25, and is being distributed to Vermonters who are 75 years or older. If you are 75 years or older, you can click on the following website link to sign up for a vaccine appointment: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/vaccine/getting-covid-19-vaccine>. If you don't have access to a computer, you can contact their call center at **855-722-7878** to sign up. The call center will be open during the week from 8:15 am - 5:30 pm and from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm on weekends. Vermonters are asked to register online whenever possible as high call volumes are expected. Here's some helpful tips:
 - Those registering for a vaccination in Phase II should sign up for a vaccination location near where they live since doses are being distributed to vaccination sites based on the number of individuals over 75 in each area.
 - If you want to register a spouse or other close loved one, you can add them as dependents.
 - If no appointment times appear for the date range and site you selected, try choosing a later date range.
 - Once registered, people should make sure to go to their appointment and arrive on time so vaccine doses don't go to waste.
 - EMS and home health agencies will be working together to vaccinate individuals who are home-bound in the coming weeks. If you are 75 or over and unable to get to a vaccination site, you can contact **2-1-1** for more info.
 - If you have previously tested positive for COVID-19 or have had a presumed COVID-19 illness, you will need to wait 90 days before getting the vaccine, since you will have antibodies that will help protect you from the virus for at least that long.
- After all Vermonters who are 75 years and older have an opportunity to be vaccinated, the State will open it up to those 70 years and older, to be followed by those 65 years

and older. Then Vermont will begin vaccinating those with certain chronic health conditions that put them at risk for serious illness from the virus.

- Patient-facing staff prioritized in Phase IA will continue to be vaccinated, even though Phase II is underway.

I've already had COVID, should I still get the vaccine?

Those who have had the COVID-19 virus within the past 90 days will need to delay vaccination so others can get it - since those who have had the coronavirus are less likely to get it again for at least 90 days.

When will I be able to get the vaccine?

Priority is currently being given to health care workers followed by those who are 75 years and older. Once everyone 75 years and older has had an opportunity to get the vaccine, it will be opened up to those 70 years and older, and then those 65 years and older. After everyone 65 years and older has had the opportunity to be vaccinated, then the vaccinations will be opened up to those with certain chronic medical conditions that put them at increased risk for serious illness from the coronavirus.

Should I call my doctor or the local hospital to get on a list for the vaccine?

No, for the foreseeable future, only those in Priority group IA or those who are 75 years or older are being vaccinated. There is no waiting list.

Can I choose which vaccine I receive?

No, you will not have an option.

Is the vaccine safe for anyone 16 years of age or older?

- If you are considering getting pregnant, already pregnant, or breastfeeding, you should talk to your OB/GYN to discuss your personal risk of getting the virus and whether or not you should receive the vaccine at this time.
- If you typically have a severe reaction to other vaccinations or IVs or have other health concerns, talk to your primary care provider.

If I have allergies, can I still get the vaccine?

There have been very few instances of people having a severe allergic reaction (those affected were fine after treatment). These are people who have had anaphylactic reactions to IV medications with these same ingredients in the past. Having a severe allergy to dust or dogs or certain foods is not a contraindication. If you carry an epi-pen because you get anaphylaxis

from IV or IM medications, or have an allergy to any of the vaccine ingredients listed below, then you may want to discuss with your primary care provider the best strategy.

| Pfizer Vaccine Ingredients | Moderna Vaccine Ingredients |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lipids: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (4-hydroxybutyl) azanediyl) bis (hexane-6,1-diyl) bis (2-hexyldecanoate) ○ [(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide ○ 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine ○ Cholesterol • Potassium chloride • Monobasic potassium phosphate • Sodium chloride • Dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate • Sucrose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lipids: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SM-102 (proprietary to Moderna) ○ Polyethylene glycol [PEG] 2000 dimyristoyl glycerol [DMG] ○ 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine [DSPC] ○ Cholesterol • Tromethamine • Tromethamine hydrochloride • Acetic acid • Sodium acetate • Sucrose |

Should I expect to miss some work due to symptoms after being vaccinated?

Systemic signs and symptoms following COVID-19 vaccination can include fever, fatigue, headache, chills, or muscle and joint pain. Most are mild to moderate in severity, occur within the first 3 days of vaccination, and resolve within 1-2 days after they occur.

Cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell are not consistent with post-vaccination symptoms and may indicate a COVID-19 infection, which would have been received in some other manner than from the vaccine.

How much will the vaccine cost me?

The vaccines will be free, however, depending on where you receive the vaccine, there may be a small fee for giving it to you. Vaccine providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

Should I have my children vaccinated?

The Pfizer vaccine is only approved for people 16 years of age and older. Further testing is needed to ensure the safety of use in children under 16.

The Moderna vaccine is only approved for people 18 years of age and older.

Do I need to continue wearing my mask and social distancing after I receive the vaccine?

Yes, while experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real life conditions, it will be important to continue with PPE and distancing to help stop the pandemic. The COVID-19 vaccination together with all our health and safety protocols will offer the best protection from getting and/or spreading the coronavirus.

Once we show that we have finally stopped the spread of this disease, then we will be able to throw away our masks and hug our friends and family.

As I decide whether or not to get the vaccine, are there long-term effects of the COVID-19 virus that I should consider?

According to the CDC, in addition to potential severe symptoms from the virus, there are many possible [long-term effects](#). These can include brain fog, depression, muscle aches, and a fever. Additional more serious long term complications can also arise including inflammation of the heart, lung or kidney issues, and memory or hair loss.

Symptoms arising from the virus are much worse than any potential symptoms from getting the vaccine. And, as we know, the virus can result in death.

Where can I learn more about the COVID vaccines?

For even more information about COVID-19 vaccines, visit:

- [Vermont Department of Health website](#).
- FDA Advisory Committee Meeting Information: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144245/download>
- NEJM article on the Pfizer vaccine: [Safety and Efficacy of the BNT162b2 mRNA Covid-19 Vaccine | NEJM](#)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/index.html>
- [Pfizer Vaccine Fact Sheet](#)
- [Moderna Vaccine Fact Sheet](#)