



COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

January 20, 2020

General Vaccine Information

Who is the CDC and what is their role with the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the national public health institute in the United States under the Department of Health and Human Services. The CDC's overall responsibility is to address health, and safety.

The CDC is focused on vaccine planning and working closely with health departments and partners to plan and operationalize a vaccination response to COVID-19. The CDC does not have a role in developing COVID-19 vaccines. Learn more about the vaccine planning process by visiting <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/8-things.html>.

What is New Jersey doing to plan for the COVID-19 vaccine?

The New Jersey Department of Health collaborated with health care partners and immunization stakeholders to develop the New Jersey Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plan. This plan encompasses suggested priority groups for vaccination, logistics of vaccine storage and handling, health care provider recruitment, tracking and reporting of immunizations, etc. The plan is available at https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/covid2019_vaccination.shtml. The Department will continue to update the plan as we receive new information and federal guidance.

Is a COVID-19 vaccine necessary?

COVID-19 can be a minor illness in some or lead to severe disease or even death in previously healthy people. This means, everyone should take the virus seriously! It is believed that the more people who get vaccinated, the less sickness will be in our communities. Many treatments and medications are being studied, but there is no cure. Prevention is key. Vaccination is an important step in helping to prevent this illness and its potentially devastating consequences.

Was a vaccine approved?

On December 11, 2020, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued the first emergency use authorization (EUA) for a vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19 in individuals 16 years of age

and older. The emergency use authorization allows the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine to be distributed in the U.S. On December 18, 2020, Moderna vaccine was approved as an EUA for individuals 18 and older in the United States. For more information, visit <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>. Learn more about these specific vaccines by visiting https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/covid2019_vaccination.shtml.

What is an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)?

An EUA is used to help make medical products available as quickly as possible by allowing unapproved medical products to reach patients in need when there are no adequate, food and drug administration (FDA) approved and available alternatives. The known and potential benefits of the product, must outweigh the known and potential risks of the product to grant an EUA. Learn more about the EUA process by watching the following video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGkwaESsGBQ>.

How much will a vaccine reduce the risk of COVID-19 and its complications?

According to the FDA, the Moderna Vaccine has 94.1% efficacy at preventing symptomatic cases. The Pfizer vaccine has 95% efficacy.

How many shots of COVID vaccine will be needed?

Both Pfizer and Moderna require two shots. These vaccines are not interchangeable meaning you need to receive **two doses** of the **same** vaccine.

When and where should I get the second dose?

There are specific spacing requirements between dose 1 and 2, depending on vaccine brand:

- Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine administered 21 days after the first dose.
- Moderna COVID-19 vaccine administered 28 days after the first dose.

The vaccination site where you received your initial dose should schedule your second dose appointment. Contact the vaccination site if you have not been scheduled for a second appointment. It is recommended to return to the same site for your second dose.

Is there a cost for the COVID-19 vaccine?

There are no out-of-pocket costs for the COVID-19 vaccine. COVID-19 vaccines will be made available to individuals regardless of insurance coverage status. Individuals won't pay coinsurance, deductibles, or copayments. Providers that administer vaccinations to patients without health insurance or whose insurance does not provide coverage of vaccination administration fees may not charge enrollees directly for any vaccine administration costs.

If I get vaccinated do I still need to wear a mask/face covering?

Yes, you will still need to wear a mask and follow other precautions. The vaccine keeps you from getting sick. It is believed that the more people who get vaccinated, the less sickness will be in our communities. We don't know yet if the vaccine prevents a person from spreading the virus.

Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available. Vaccines boost your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like masks and physical distancing, help reduce your chance of being exposed to, or spreading, the virus. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations for [how to protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

Vaccine Availability

When can I get my vaccine? What are the phases?

Eventually the COVID-19 vaccine will be available to everyone who wants it in New Jersey. New Jersey is using a phased approach to COVID-19 vaccination to ensure that limited vaccines are distributed in a fair and equitable manner.

Phase 1 A began on December 15, 2020. This phase includes paid and unpaid persons serving in health care settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials as well as residents and staff of long-term congregate settings.

On January 7th, vaccines became available to those in Phase 1B, starting with sworn law enforcement personnel and fire professionals, which includes but is not limited to police officers and paid and unpaid firefighters. Many sworn law enforcement personnel are also first responders and are the first priority group within Phase 1B and will be the first in that group to have access.

Beginning Thursday, January 14, all New Jersey residents ages 65 and older, and individuals ages 16-64 with certain medical conditions, as [defined](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), that increase the risk of severe illness from the virus, are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccination. Those conditions include cancer, chronic kidney disease, COPD, Down Syndrome, heart conditions, obesity and severe obesity, sickle cell disease, smoking, and type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Individuals who are pregnant and those in an immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant are also eligible but should follow CDC guidance and first discuss vaccination with their medical provider before receiving the vaccine.

More groups will become eligible in the upcoming weeks.

How can I schedule an appointment to get vaccinated?

If you are eligible to receive a vaccine, there are generally three ways to get vaccinated:

1. You can make an appointment directly with one of the many designated vaccination sites across the state. [Click here to view a full list of these designated vaccination sites.](#)
2. You can pre-register for the vaccine on the NJ Vaccine Scheduling System, and you will be notified when an appointment is available to you. [Click here to visit the NJ Vaccine Scheduling System.](#)

3. Select healthcare facilities, including many hospitals, are offering vaccines directly to their workers. If you work at one of the facilities, you can contact your employer to learn if the vaccine is available to you from your employer.

Note: Whenever New Jersey expands eligibility, it may take several weeks for appointments to be available to all eligible. Vaccine availability remains very limited in New Jersey.

Can you tell me more about the NJVSS? Is my information private?

The NJ Vaccine Scheduling System (NJVSS) is a secure online website developed by the NJ Dept of Health for public health purposes. The NJVSS is a system that allows you to sign-up to make a COVID-19 vaccine appointment.

You will be asked to provide personal information (name, address, gender, race and email), medical screening and occupation information. This helps to determine your eligibility for the vaccine or more importantly, which phase best fits you! NJVSS will send you e-mail reminders about your appointment and reminders about getting the second dose. The NJVSS also lets you make an appointment at a vaccination location most convenient for you.

The information collected on the NJVSS is used for public health purposes only AND to ensure that same person returns for the second dose of the same vaccine. For more information visit, <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/vaccine> and <https://covidvaccine.nj.gov/>.

How do consumers prove that they are eligible for vaccination?

A person is eligible if they live, work, or are being educated in New Jersey and can self-identify as meeting the criteria for the current sub-phase. No professional or medical documentation is required.

What if I am not eligible to get the vaccine?

If you don't qualify for a vaccine at this time, register on the [NJ Vaccine Scheduling System](#) and we will notify you when the vaccine is available for you.

You can call [855-568-0545](tel:855-568-0545) for help with the NJ Vaccine Scheduling System. This number is an automated system. Live operators will be available in the coming days.

What should I do to protect myself since I am not eligible to receive the COVID vaccine?

You should continue to cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others, avoid close contact with people who are sick, practice social distancing, and wash your hands often. Get more information to learn [how to protect yourself and others](#).

Safety Concerns

What are clinical trials? I am concerned that this vaccine was made too quickly and did not undergo enough testing as other vaccines.

Clinical trials are research studies performed in people that are aimed at evaluating a medical, surgical, or behavioral intervention. They are the primary way that researchers find out if a new treatment, like a new drug, vaccine, or medical device is safe and effective in people.

Currently, clinical trials are evaluating investigational COVID-19 vaccines in many thousands of study participants to generate scientific data and other information for the FDA to determine their safety and effectiveness. These clinical trials are being conducted according to rigorous safety standards. For detailed information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html>.

What are some of the vaccine side effects?

The most common side effects are injection site pain, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, and joint pain. Some people in the clinical trials have reported fever. Side effects are more common after the second dose; younger adults, who have more robust immune systems, reported more side effects than older adults.

As people get vaccinated, CDC, FDA, and other federal partners will use the following existing, robust systems and data sources to conduct ongoing safety monitoring. For more information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html>.

I carry an Epinephrine Auto Injector (EpiPen®, EpiPen Jr®) for my current allergies. Will I be monitored after getting the vaccine to make sure I don't have anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction)?

Yes, the CDC currently recommends that providers should consider observing vaccine recipients for 15 minutes after receipt of a vaccine. Persons with a history of anaphylaxis (due to any cause) should be observed for 30 minutes.

The CDC recommends that people with a history of anaphylaxis not related to vaccines or injectable medications—such as food, pet, venom, environmental, or latex allergies—get vaccinated. People with a history of allergies to oral medications or a family history of severe allergic reactions may also get vaccinated. Although vaccination sites should have all the necessary emergency medical equipment available on site, consider bringing your EpiPen as an extra precaution.

How can I sign up for a clinical trial?

Information on how to volunteer for a COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial is available on the National Institute of Health website, <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/clinical-trials/covid-19-clinical-trials>.

Is this a “live” virus vaccine?

The current vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) do not contain any virus. The vaccines cannot cause infection with COVID-19, nor can it cause you to infect others.

Can pregnant women get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Until findings are available from clinical trials and additional studies, only limited data are available on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, including mRNA vaccines, administered during pregnancy.

People who are pregnant and part of a [group recommended](#) to receive the COVID-19 vaccine may choose to be vaccinated. If they have questions about getting vaccinated, a discussion with a healthcare provider might help them make an informed decision.

Do the COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility (inability to get pregnant)?

The vaccines have **not** been associated with infertility since the vaccine does not change a person's DNA.

Can children receive the COVID-19 vaccines?

The Pfizer vaccine is authorized for use in those 16 and older. The Moderna vaccine is authorized for use in those 18 and older. For information specific to the vaccines, please review the EUA fact sheets available at

https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/EUA_Pfizer_FactSheet_for_Recipients.pdf and

https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/eua_moderna_factsheet_for_recipients.pdf.

What is messenger RNA?

The COVID-19 vaccine is a messenger RNA vaccine or mRNA. It doesn't include the actual germ like some vaccines. Messenger RNA vaccine gives instructions to the body about how to make a protein that the body uses for the immune response, which is needed to make antibodies. The vaccine helps to trigger the production of protein that is needed to make antibodies.

Antibodies are what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.

For more information, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mrna.html>.

Will the mRNA vaccines change my DNA?

mRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA (genetic material) is kept.

Where can I learn more about vaccine safety and how to report a side effect?

There are different systems in place to monitor vaccine safety, including the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System <https://vaers.hhs.gov/index.html> and the smart phone app, v-safe.

Your doctor will provide you with information to register for v-safe. Additional information is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/vsafe.html>.

Protection from Vaccine/Efficacy

How soon do antibodies form after getting the vaccine (i.e., how soon after getting vaccine am I protected)?

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. So, it is important to continue to protect yourself and keep wearing a mask and keep physical distance from others. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>.

If I had COVID-19 and recovered do I need to get the vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to you regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection. You should not be required to have an antibody test before you are vaccinated. However, anyone currently infected with COVID-19 should wait to get vaccinated until after their illness has resolved and after they have met the [criteria](#) to discontinue isolation. Additionally, current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. Therefore, people with a recent infection may delay vaccination until the end of that 90-day period if desired.

Other Vaccines

Can I get the flu shot and the new COVID-19 vaccine on the same day?

Given the lack of data on the safety and efficacy of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines administered simultaneously with other vaccines, the vaccine series should be administered alone, with a minimum interval of 14 days before or after administration with any other vaccines. If mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are inadvertently administered within 14 days of another vaccine, doses do not need to be repeated for either vaccine.

Will getting the flu vaccine protect me against coronavirus?

No. Influenza viruses and coronaviruses are different. Getting a flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19; however, the vaccine can reduce flu illnesses, hospitalizations, and can help to conserve potentially scarce healthcare resources during the pandemic. It's likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading this fall and winter, making it more important than ever to get a flu vaccine! It is the best way to protect yourself and others – especially those who are particularly vulnerable to both COVID-19 and influenza such as older adults and those with chronic health conditions.

Additional Information

- https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_vaccination.shtml
- <https://covid19.nj.gov/>
- <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/vaccine>
- COVID-19 Hotline 1-800-962-1253 or 2-1-1 (*for information only. NOT for scheduling vaccine appointments*)
- Call [855-568-0545](tel:855-568-0545) for help with the NJ Vaccine Scheduling System. This number is an automated system. Live operators will be available in the coming days.