Ask the Expert: COVID-19 Vaccine
Information for People with Disabilities

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This sheet contains basic information about and resources for the COVID-19 vaccine in three key areas:

- **Vaccine Development**
- **Vaccine Distribution**
- **Vaccine Safety**

Q: How is HHS coordinating the COVID-19 vaccine response?

A: In partnership among components of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Defense, with engagement from private firms and other federal agencies, and coordinating among existing HHS-wide efforts, we have created "Operation Warp Speed," a plan to accelerate the development, manufacturing and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. Operation Warp Speed's goal is to produce and deliver **300 million** doses of safe and effective vaccines with the initial doses available by January 2021[1].

We are also working with several federal entities that will receive direct allocation of COVID-19 vaccines, including the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Department of Defense, Department of State, Veterans Health Administration and Indian Health Service.

Q: Now that the first vaccine is ready to be administered, who can get the vaccine and when will it be widely available to our communities?

A: The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended that vaccines in the first phase of the COVID-19 vaccination program (Phase 1a) should be offered to health care personnel (HCP) and residents of long-term care facilities. The ACIP has recommended that planning should begin for subsequent phases, including Phase 1b (frontline essential workers and individuals 75 years of age and older) and Phase 1c (other essential workers, persons 65–74 years of age, and individuals 16–64 years of age with underlying medical conditions). States and other jurisdictions will determine the timing of vaccination for different groups.

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[1] Information contained in this document current up to 1/4/21.

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Q: Will insurance plans cover the vaccine, or will there be a cost passed on to patients?
A: COVID-19 vaccine will be distributed by the federal government at no cost to COVID-19 vaccination providers, so there is no cost to individuals for the vaccine itself. However, providers may bill your insurance company or Medicaid and Medicare for an office visit and/or an administration fee when administering the COVID-19 vaccine. It is important to know that enrolled vaccine providers **must** **administer** COVID-19 vaccine regardless of the vaccine recipient's ability to pay COVID-19 vaccine administration fees or coverage status.

Q: If someone receives the vaccine does it mean they won't get COVID?
A: Two COVID-19 vaccines have been approved for use in the United States from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna. Based on evidence from clinical trials, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was 95%, and the Moderna vaccine was 94.1% effective at preventing laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 illness in people without evidence of previous infection.
Both vaccines are Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines. mRNA vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19. They are a new type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein—or even just a piece of a protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.

Q: If someone has already had COVID, should they take the vaccine?
A: Yes. CDC recommends that people get vaccinated even if they already had COVID-19, because you can become infected more than once. While you may have some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, we don't know how long this protection will last.

Q: What should older adults, those with chronic health conditions, and those with illness or other conditions that may compromise their immune systems know about the vaccine?
A: COVID-19 vaccination is especially important for people with underlying health conditions. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. All COVID-19 vaccines were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they meet safety standards and protect adults of different ages, races, ethnicities. There were no serious safety concerns, although severe allergic reactions have been reported as the vaccine has rolled out more broadly. CDC and the FDA will keep monitoring the vaccines to look for safety issues after they are authorized and in use. If individuals have specific questions about their health conditions and vaccination, consult with your healthcare provider.

Q: Are there additional safety precautions that people with disabilities, older adults and/or individuals with chronic health conditions should be taking?

A: It is important that these individuals and any of their direct support care providers keep covering their mouths and noses with a mask, wash hands often, and stay at least 6 feet away from others before and after getting each dose of the vaccine. This is because the vaccines are not 100% effective. Everyone who gets vaccinated should continue taking these precautions until the vaccine is in widespread use and COVID-19 rates have declined. Wearing masks may be difficult for some people with sensory, cognitive, or behavioral issues. If people are unable to wear a mask properly or cannot tolerate a mask, they should not wear one, and adaptations and alternatives should be considered

Q: Should people who take several medications to manage their health take the vaccine?
A: mRNA COVID-19 vaccines may be administered to persons with underlying medical conditions who have no contraindications to vaccination (e.g. severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis). Clinical trials demonstrated similar safety and efficacy profiles in persons with some underlying medical conditions, including those that place them at increased risk for severe COVID-19, compared to persons without comorbidities. If individuals have specific questions about the medications they take and vaccination, they should consult with their healthcare provider.

Resources

You will find the most recent information to share with your communities at cdc.gov/coronavirus. Because the site is regularly updated, check back frequently for the most current information to share in your social media, websites and other communications.

Precautions for People with Disabilities: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-disabilities.html
Guidance for Direct Service Providers: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/direct-service-providers.html
Guidance for Group Homes for Individuals with Disabilities:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/group-homes.html
Precautions for People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-developmental-behavioral-disabilities.html
Healthcare Needs for Children and Youth: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Children-and-Youth-with-Special-Healthcare-Needs
Precautions for People at Increased Risk: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.htm
Guidance for Older Adults: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html
CDC's YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/c/CDC/featured?app=desktop

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