

# COVID-19 VACCINE: **FAQs**

## A primer on vaccine allocation, prioritization, and timelines

Updated: April 12, 2021

The Food and Drug Administration has granted emergency use authorization (EUA) for COVID-19 vaccines developed by Johnson & Johnson, Moderna and Pfizer.

The U.S. government had distributed about [190 million doses](#) to the states and other jurisdictions by the end of March. Approximately 148 million doses have been administered. About 20% of the population is said to be fully vaccinated.



### What was the approval process for these vaccines?

COVID-19 vaccines received EUA after extensive scientific reviews concluded each vaccine met the highest standards for safety and effectiveness. The vaccines benefited from a production process that enabled broader manufacturing to begin before clinical trials with more than 70,000 subjects concluded. The EUA was not granted until there was certainty that the vaccines developed by both manufacturers met the same safety and efficacy standards as any other vaccine. The FDA determined both vaccines are “highly effective,” and this was confirmed by states that established their own vaccine review panels.



### How many doses of the vaccines are needed to work?

The COVID-19 vaccine developed by the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson requires a single shot. Vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna require two shots three or four weeks apart respectively.



### How many Americans need to be vaccinated to significantly control the spread of COVID-19?

[Experts say](#) we need 70% to 80% of the population—more than 200 million Americans—to have immunity to the novel coronavirus for us to benefit from herd immunity. “With herd immunity, the vast majority of a population are vaccinated, lowering the overall amount of virus able to spread in the whole population,” according to [WHO](#).



### How long will it take to vaccinate enough Americans and achieve herd immunity?

[CDC estimates](#) suggest about a quarter of the U.S. population has been infected with the novel coronavirus.

President Biden announced [150 million shots](#) were administered in 75 days of his administration. President Biden believes a more normal Fourth of July is within reach

“We should not get so fixated on this elusive number of herd immunity. We should just be concerned about getting as many people vaccinated as quickly as we possibly can because herd immunity is still somewhat of an elusive number... And every day that goes by now, with more than 2 million doses going into people, we’re getting closer and closer to control of this pandemic,” [Dr. Fauci said in March](#).

Note: It is unclear how long an individual remains immune to COVID-19 after infection or vaccination.



## What are some of the factors that may affect that timeline?

Vaccine supply has been a challenge. The Biden administration increased the number of doses distributed to the states from 8.6 million doses to [27 million doses per week](#). Most of these doses go to states and other jurisdictions. Willingness of the public to receive a vaccination is one of the critical factors in determining how fast the U.S. can reach the herd immunity threshold. A report released by [Pew Research Center](#) in March shows 19% of adults have already received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine. Another 50% say they definitely or probably plan to get vaccinated. Together, 69% of the public intends to get a vaccine or already has been vaccinated. That's up from November, when 60% of U.S. adults said they planned to get vaccinated. The trust gap is largest in the Black community, with only [24%](#) of Black Americans saying they have a great deal of confidence that the research and development process produced safe and effective vaccines.



## Who decides how much vaccine each state gets, and how are those allocations determined?

The U.S. government [allocates vaccines](#) to 64 jurisdictions, including all states and territories, based on population. Each state establishes its own policies regarding prioritization and distribution. As supplies increase, a number of pharmacies are receiving allocations directly from the U.S. government through a new partnership with independent pharmacy networks called the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program



## Who's getting the vaccine first, and what's the sequence for other groups?

President Biden called for all states, Tribes, and territories to make all U.S. adults eligible for vaccination by [April 19](#). As of March 29, 31 states said they will open eligibility to all adults by April 19. By April 19, 90% of all U.S. adults will be eligible for vaccination and 90% will have a vaccination site within five miles of where they live.



## What constitutes an “essential employee” and how are decisions being made about prioritization within that group while supplies remain limited?

The Department of Homeland Security established a list of “essential critical infrastructure workers” in early 2020 that “is intended to be overly inclusive, reflecting the diversity of industries across the United States.” This list was originally used to ensure critical workers had access to their workplaces during broader shutdowns.

The categorizations have been used to prioritize the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. “Critical infrastructure workforce varies by jurisdiction,” according to the document, which is intended to inform state and local planning processes. “Each jurisdiction must decide which groups to focus on when vaccine supply is limited by determining key sectors that may be within their populations (e.g., port-related workers in coastal jurisdictions).”

The Kaiser Family Foundation has compiled [state distribution plans](#). The National Academy for State Health Policy analyzed those plans and shared [key observations](#).



## How do I get a shot?

Check with your [local or state health department](#). Each jurisdiction has its own approach to the phased allocation of COVID-19 vaccine doses. Individuals can obtain information about vaccine availability at sites across the country through [vaccinefinder.org](#).



## How much does it cost to get vaccinated?

The U.S. government has contracted to purchase enough doses to vaccinate every American. During the public health emergency, these doses are being provided at no cost to the patient.



## What can businesses and local chambers do to support mass vaccination?

The private sector has an important role to play in the effort to vaccinate every American. The U.S. Chamber, along with other leading business groups, joined the White House in urging companies of all sizes to [Rally for Recovery by making a commitment](#) to take the steps required to fight the pandemic.

This is important because, as noted in the [National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response](#), the government is prioritizing engagement with the business community and plans to work with large employers to establish workplace vaccination centers. Businesses of all sizes can promote vaccination to workers and customers. They can also collaborate with local and state health authorities to support mass vaccination efforts by providing space, volunteers, or other critical support. Visit this [tracker](#) to learn more about the ways businesses are stepping up.



## Can we stop wearing masks and practicing social distancing now that vaccines are available?

No. It is essential that all of us continue to wear face coverings, maintain physical distance whenever possible, and follow the guidance of local public health officials. There is not enough evidence as to whether vaccinated persons can still be infectious if exposed to the virus. “I don’t believe we’re going to be able to throw the masks away and forget about physical separation and congregant settings for a while, probably likely until we get into the late fall and early next winter,” Dr. Fauci said. ([CSIS](#))

Face coverings reduce the risk to the wearer and to those they come in contact with by reducing the risk that droplets containing the novel coronavirus will pass from one person to another. ([Mayo](#))

Face masks are not a substitute for social distancing. CDC recommends staying at least six feet away from anyone who is not in your household. ([CDC](#))



## If you already had COVID-19, do you still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine?

[Yes](#). The CDC recommends getting vaccinated regardless of whether you have had COVID-19.



## Is it normal to experience side effects after receiving a COVID-19 vaccination?

It is [normal](#) to experience an immune response as your body is building protection. Common side effects include pain, redness, and swelling in the arm where the vaccine was administered. The immune response after your second shot may be more intense than it was after the first shot.



## What are the vaccine efficacy estimates for authorized COVID-19 vaccines?

It is not possible to compare these vaccines against each other. All authorized COVID-19 vaccines demonstrated [high efficacy](#) ( $\geq 89\%$ ) against COVID-19 severe enough to require hospitalization. The overall efficacy for each authorized COVID-19 vaccine was similar across different populations, including elderly and younger adults, in persons with and without underlying health conditions, and in persons representing different races and ethnicities.



## When are people considered to be fully vaccinated?

If you receive the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, you are [fully vaccinated](#) two weeks after the second dose in a two-dose series. If you receive Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen single-dose vaccine, you are fully vaccinated two weeks after you receive the shot.



### What precautions should you take after being fully vaccinated?

The [CDC](#) recommends wearing a mask in public places, staying six feet apart from others, washing hands frequently, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces. The CDC [says](#) fully vaccinated individuals can travel within the United States without any additional testing or quarantine requirements. If you experience symptoms of COVID-19, you should get tested and stay at home.



### What activities are safe after you've been vaccinated?

The [CDC](#) approves gathering indoors with fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask. The CDC approves gathering indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household, unless someone in the household has an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.



### Where can I find more information and stay up to date?

One of the most challenging things for any business owner right now is identifying the most reliable and relevant information about the state of the pandemic. These are some trusted resources you will find helpful as you may find helpful:

- [Dashboard: COVID-19 Vaccinations in the United States](#) (CDC)
- [Vaccine Communication Toolkit for Essential Workers](#) (CDC)
- [Interactive Map of COVID-19 Clinical Trials in the U.S.](#) (U.S. Chamber)
- [What You Need to Know about COVID-19 Vaccines](#) (CDC)
- [Video: What Black America Needs to Know about COVID-19 and Vaccines](#) (Black Coalition Against COVID-19)
- [Vaccine Development 101](#) (FDA)
- [Digital Resources Center](#) (U.S. Chamber)
- [The Best Ways for Employers to Promote COVID-19 Vaccines](#) (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation)
- [10 Steps to Host a Vaccine Clinic](#) (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation)
- [Tip Sheet for Local Chambers in the Fight Against COVID-19](#) (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation)

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