

COVID-19 Vaccine: Frequently Asked Questions



This is a brief overview of what we know now about the COVID-19 vaccines. More FAQs and information can be found at [TexasHealth.org/Vaccine](https://www.texashealth.org/vaccine).

Vaccine Distribution

North Texans are encouraged to sign up for the COVID-19 vaccine through their county health department website:

Collin County: www.collincountytx.gov

Dallas County: www.dallascounty.org

Denton County: www.dentoncounty.gov

Tarrant County: www.tarrantcounty.com



Information for additional counties is located on the state [Health and Human Services website](https://hhs.texas.gov/) (<https://hhs.texas.gov/>).

What is the vaccine distribution plan?

The Texas Department of State Health Services guiding principles for vaccine distribution use a phased and tiered approach. Vaccine distribution will be prioritized by:

- **1A Direct Care:** Hospital, Long-Term Care, EMS, Home Health, Outpatient, ER/Urgent Care, Pharmacies, Last Responders, School Nurses
- **1A Long-Term Care:** Residents of long-term care facilities
- **1B Persons:** Individuals age 65+ or 16+ with at least one chronic medical condition (e.g. pregnancy, cancer, COPD, certain heart conditions, sickle cell disease, obesity, etc.). For more information, visit dshs.texas.gov.

Can I sign up on a wait list for a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, North Texans can sign up through their county health department website ([Collin](#), [Denton](#), [Dallas](#), [Tarrant](#)). Information for additional counties is located on the state [Health and Human Services website](https://hhs.texas.gov/). As vaccine supply becomes more readily available, access will increase.

As available, vaccines will also be distributed through Texas Health primary care offices across North Texas. Following the tiering determined by the state of Texas, the current focus is vaccination for Phase 1A and 1B individuals. Texas Health Family Care, Texas Health

Internal Medicine, and Texas Health Adult Care patients should watch for messages about the vaccine from their doctor. These Texas Health primary care practices will be working to vaccinate patients as quickly as possible. Patients do not need to sign up for the vaccine or call the office as physicians already have contact information.

Vaccinations are available by appointment only, regardless of whether you are obtaining your vaccine via the county health department or through your physician office and are not available at hospitals or physician offices on a walk-in basis.

I'm over the age of 65. Where and when can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccine for community members in Phase 1B (individuals age 65+ or 16+ with at least one chronic medical condition) is being distributed as it becomes available. North Texans should register on their county health department website ([Collin](#), [Denton](#), [Dallas](#), [Tarrant](#)). State vaccine information is [available here](#). Texas Health is a community vaccine hub for Tarrant County and will work with the Tarrant County Health Department to administer vaccines based on the guiding principles issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Texas Health primary care patients — including any Texas Health Family Care, Texas Health Internal Medicine, and Texas Health Adult Care locations — should watch for messages from their doctor. Texas Health primary care patients are eligible for the vaccine from their primary care office even if they also register with the county site in advance.

I'm a health care worker or essential worker in the community, and my employer did not receive vaccine. Can I receive a COVID-19 vaccine from Texas Health?

State vaccine information is available [here](#). You can also visit your county health department website for vaccine registration information.

General Vaccine Information

If I've already had COVID-19, would the vaccine be helpful?

Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, people may be advised to get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they have been sick with COVID-19 before.

At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long.

Individuals who are known COVID-19 positive should wait to receive the vaccine until they are symptom free and no longer require isolation. There is no minimal interval between infection and vaccination, but current evidence suggests reinfection is unlikely within 90 days, so individuals may choose to defer the vaccine until the end of the 90-day period.

How were the vaccines tested?

Clinical trials are evaluating investigational COVID-19 vaccines in tens of thousands of study participants to enable the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to determine safety and effectiveness. These clinical trials are being conducted according to the FDA's rigorous standards.

The trials are conducted in three phases.

Phase 1 - The vaccine is given to a small number of generally healthy people to assess its safety at increasing doses and to gain early information about how well the vaccine works to induce an immune response in people.

Phase 2 - Studies include more people with varying health statuses and from different demographic groups receiving various dosages. These studies provide additional safety information and may provide initial information regarding the effectiveness of the vaccine.

Phase 3 - The vaccine is administered to thousands of people in randomized, controlled studies involving broad demographic groups. In a randomized, controlled study, individuals are allocated at random to receive the vaccine and are compared against those in the study who did not receive the vaccine. This phase generates critical information on effectiveness and additional important safety data. It provides additional information about the immune response in people who receive the vaccine compared to those who receive a control, such as a placebo. ([FDA](#))

Will the COVID-19 vaccine be free?

The CDC says that [vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost](#). However, vaccine providers may charge an administration fee for giving the vaccine dose to someone. Vaccine providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

If I get the COVID-19 vaccine, can I relax the safety precautions I have been taking?

No. The vaccine does not replace the need for safety precautions such as:



wearing a mask,



maintaining a safe distance,



washing your hands and



limiting gatherings with individuals outside your household.

Do I need to keep the vaccination card that I receive after my first dose?

Yes. The vaccination card lists the date of your first dose, which can help remind you when your second dose is due. It also lists the vaccine manufacturer (e.g. Pfizer or Moderna) and can serve as proof of vaccination.



Vaccine Doses, Safety, Efficacy and Side Effects

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for vulnerable populations?

Pregnant women: As of Dec. 14, 2020, no data is available on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant women. If a woman is part of a group (e.g., healthcare personnel) who is recommended to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, she may choose to be vaccinated. A discussion with her healthcare provider can help her make an informed decision.

- Based on current recommendations from the [American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology](#), if you are planning or trying to get pregnant, you can still get a COVID-19 vaccine. You also do not need to delay getting pregnant after you get a vaccine. Some COVID-19 vaccines will require two doses. If you find out you are pregnant after you have the first dose, you should still get the second dose.

Breastfeeding: As of Dec. 14, 2020, no data is available on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in lactating women or the effects of mRNA vaccines on the breastfed infant or milk production/excretion. If a woman is part of a group (e.g., healthcare personnel) who is recommended to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and is lactating, she may choose to be vaccinated. A discussion with her healthcare provider can help her make an informed decision.

Older adults: Currently, people 65 years and older are recommended for early COVID-19 vaccination according to the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices. Older adults are considered at highest risk for COVID-19 due to increased illness severity and risk of death.

- Early vaccination for this patient population is highly recommended.

Immunocompromised: Currently, people at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness due to underlying medical conditions are recommended for early COVID-19 vaccination according to the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices. People with certain underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for COVID-19, therefore it is highly recommended this patient population receive the vaccine.

- Underlying medical conditions include but are not limited to: Cancer, COPD, solid organ transplant recipients, heart failure, coronary artery disease, sickle cell disease, etc.

Severe illness: Defined as individuals with COVID-19 who may require hospitalization, intensive care or mechanical ventilation.

How many doses of a COVID-19 vaccine will I need?

The Pfizer vaccine is an initial vaccination and a second dose 17 to 21 days later. The Moderna vaccine uses an initial vaccination and a second dose 24-28 days later. The different vaccine products are not interchangeable; the second dose must be completed with the same vaccine brand as the first.

Do I have to go to the same place to receive both doses of the vaccine?

It is recommended that you go to the same provider for your second vaccine dose as you did for your first dose. The most important thing is to make sure you get the second dose within the recommended timeframe, and it is critical that your first and second dose are from the same manufacturer. This is also why it is important to keep the vaccination card you receive when you get your first dose.

Should I be concerned that a second dose will not be available given the limited supply of vaccine?

Part of the planning process for those giving the vaccine includes having both first and second doses available.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Side effects are expected to be similar to, but perhaps more pronounced than, the side effects some people experience following the flu vaccine. Both Pfizer and Moderna have said their vaccines were “well-tolerated” in clinical trials. Commonly reported adverse effects of the vaccine have been called “mild and nonspecific.” These include fever, chills, headache and injection site reactions (soreness/pain, redness, muscle aches). The manufacturers said the vaccines are safe and effective, and that most of the side effects resolved shortly after the doses were administered.

Moderna has disclosed some reports among trial participants of “severe” side effects, or those that could impede daily activity. Significant side effects from the first dose included injection site pain, but more felt worse after the second dose — reporting fatigue, muscle and joint pain, and headache, among other symptoms. In the Pfizer trial, participants reported fatigue and headaches after getting the second dose. ([The Washington Post](#), [Pfizer](#) and [Moderna](#) news releases)

If symptoms worsen or do not resolve after one week, contact your primary care physician and seek medical attention.

FDA documents about the Pfizer vaccine can be found [here](#).

FDA documents about the Moderna vaccine can be found [here](#).

Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No. It is not possible to get COVID-19 from vaccines. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use only a messenger RNA (mRNA) gene, not the actual virus, to trigger a person’s immune system to produce protective antibodies against COVID-19. Other vaccines being studied use inactivated virus. None of these can cause COVID-19.

Because the vaccine triggers the immune system to respond as if the actual virus was present a person may experience some side effects similar to those caused by the virus.

What are the efficacy rates of the vaccines and what does that mean?

Vaccine efficacy (VE) measures the proportionate reduction in disease among a vaccinated group in a clinical trial. A VE of 90% indicates a 90% reduction in disease occurrence among the vaccinated group, or a 90% reduction from the number of cases you would expect if they have not been vaccinated.

In clinical trials the Pfizer vaccine has demonstrated a VE of 95%. The Moderna vaccine’s VE is 94.5%. ([CDC](#), [Business Insider](#))

