

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. Visit your local county public health department website or call the number provided there to learn more about that county's registration and scheduling process. Information for additional counties is located on the state Health and Human Services website: hhs.texas.gov.

Collin County: www.collincountytx.gov

Dallas County: www.dallascounty.org

Denton County: www.dentoncounty.gov

Tarrant County: www.tarrantcounty.com



watch for messages about the vaccine from their doctor. 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, through your physician, or if employed by an independent school district that Texas Health is working with to offer vaccinations. Vaccines are not available at hospitals or physician offices on a walk-in basis.

I'm over the age of 50. Where and when can I get a vaccination?

Vaccine for eligible community members is being distributed as it becomes available. Visit your local county public health department website ([Collin](#), [Denton](#), [Dallas](#), [Tarrant](#)) or call the number provided there to learn more about that county's registration and scheduling process. Most either offer wait lists or provide options to schedule an appointment. Texas Health is one of many local vaccine providers. The county determines how to assign people to local providers.

State vaccine information is available [here](#).

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 through their primary care office even if they also register with the county site in advance.

What is the vaccine distribution plan?

The Texas Department of State Health Services guiding principles for vaccine distribution use a phased and tiered approach. For more information about eligibility and distribution, visit dshs.texas.gov.

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

Visit your local county public health department website ([Collin](#), [Denton](#), [Dallas](#), [Tarrant](#)) or call the number provided there to learn more about that county's registration and scheduling process. Most either offer wait lists or provide options to schedule an appointment. Information for additional counties is located on the state [Health and Human Services website](#). As vaccine supply becomes more available, it will be easier to get a shot.

As available, vaccines will also be distributed to Texas Health primary care patients across North Texas. Texas Health Family Care, Texas Health Internal Medicine, and Texas Health Adult Care patients should

Why have I not been scheduled for a vaccination appointment yet?

The first step to get a vaccine is to [register with a county](#). Registering with a county gets you on their wait list. Public Health departments then assign community members from their waiting lists to partner vaccine providers, like Texas Health.

It may take several weeks or more for an appointment after you register through a county. More people have registered to get a COVID-19 vaccine than there is currently supply available. As vaccines become available, you will be contacted for an appointment if you

are eligible and registered through a county health department. Visit your local county public health department website ([Collin](#), [Denton](#), [Dallas](#), [Tarrant](#)) or call the number provided there to learn more about that county's registration and scheduling process. Most either offer wait lists or provide options to schedule an appointment.

Can I choose which vaccine I get?

Not at this time. We encourage you to take the first vaccine appointment you are offered. The current vaccine brands – Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson – have all shown to be effective against COVID-19. If you have questions, talk to your doctor.

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 acquired immunity, varies from person to person.

Individuals who are known COVID-19 positive should wait to receive the vaccine until they are symptom free and no longer require isolation. For most people this is 14 days with no signs or symptoms. People who have had COVID-19 may want to check with their primary care provider to see when it is OK to start their vaccines

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.

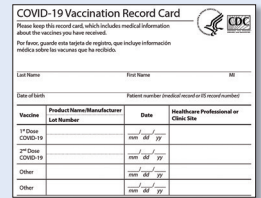
Phase 1 The vaccine is given to a small number of generally healthy people to assess its safety at increasing doses and to gain early information about how well the vaccine works to induce an immune response in people.

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](#))

Do I need to keep the Vaccination Card that I receive after my first dose?

Yes. For Johnson & Johnson, which only requires one dose, the Vaccination Card can serve as proof of vaccination. For Pfizer and Moderna, which require two doses, 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 brand (e.g. Pfizer or Moderna) and can serve as proof of vaccination. Remember the same vaccine brand must be used for both doses; the brands are not interchangeable.



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.

Should I take pain relievers before or after I get my vaccine?

The CDC does not recommend taking pain relievers such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen (Tylenol®, Advil®, etc.) before getting your COVID-19 vaccine ([CDC](#)). It is not known how these medicines may affect how well the vaccine works. Talk to your doctor about taking over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen, aspirin, antihistamines, or acetaminophen for any pain and discomfort you may experience after getting vaccinated. You might be able to take one of these medicines for side effects after your vaccine if you have no other medical reasons that prevent you from taking these medications normally.

If your doctor has recommended that you take pain relievers regularly or even daily for certain conditions, do not stop taking them before your vaccine without first consulting your doctor.

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



limiting gatherings
with people outside
your household

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.

Breastfeeding: As of Dec. 14, 2020, no data is available on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in women who are breastfeeding 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 breastfeeding, 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 group 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 group 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 is 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?

- Johnson & Johnson vaccine: One dose.
- Pfizer vaccine: Two doses; the second dose 17-21 days after your first shot.
- Moderna vaccine: Two doses; the second dose 24-28 days after your first shot.

CDC guidelines allow up to 6 weeks to receive your second dose. Remember the same vaccine brand must be used for both doses; the brands are not interchangeable.

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

Go to the same place for your second vaccine dose as you did for your first dose. It's important to make sure you get the second dose within the recommended timeframe, and it is critical that your first and second dose are the same brand. This is also why it is important to keep the Vaccination Card you receive when you get your first dose. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine only requires one dose.

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

The place where you got your first dose is planning ahead for second doses. Go back to the same place for your second dose, and vaccine should be available for you.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

It's important to know the difference between side effects and allergic reactions. Side effects are your body's natural response to medications or vaccines. These are minor, expected changes that go away in a few days.

Side effects for the COVID-19 vaccines are expected to be similar to, but perhaps more pronounced than, the side effects some people experience following the flu vaccine. These can 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 given.

Moderna has reported that some trial participants had "severe" side effects, and others had to slow down on their daily activities for a few days. 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). The Johnson & Johnson trial showed that participants had similar side effects after their vaccine. Research around side effects is ongoing.

If symptoms worsen or do not go away after one week, contact your primary care provider and get medical attention.

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

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

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

What are severe allergic reactions to COVID-19 vaccines?

Some people may have allergic reactions to COVID-19 vaccines. There are different levels of allergic reactions to the vaccines. Unlike side effects, allergic reactions are serious reactions medications or vaccines. ([CDC](#))

What if I have a severe allergic reaction after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Texas Health has put safeguards in place to monitor for the possibility of severe allergic reactions.
 - People who have had severe allergic reactions or who have had any type of immediate allergic reaction (within four hours) to a vaccine or injectable therapy will be monitored at the vaccine clinic for 30 minutes after getting the vaccine. All other people will be monitored for 15 minutes.
 - Appropriate medications and equipment—such as epinephrine, antihistamines, stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, and timing devices to check your pulse are available at each vaccine clinic.
- If you have a severe allergic reaction after leaving the vaccine site, call 911 right away.
- The CDC considers a severe allergic reaction to be when a person needs to be treated with epinephrine, an EpiPen®, or if they must go to the hospital for emergency care. (e.g. anaphylaxis).

How will I know ahead of time if I'm allergic to an ingredient in the vaccine?

- A list of vaccine ingredients is [here](#).
- If you have had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in the COVID-19 vaccine, **you should not get either of the currently available COVID-19 vaccines.**
- If you had a severe allergic reaction after getting the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, **the CDC recommends that you should not get the second dose.**

What if I had a non-severe allergic reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine?

- If you have had an immediate allergic reaction—even if it was not severe—to any ingredient in a COVID-19 vaccine, **the CDC recommends that you should not get either of the currently available COVID-19 vaccines. An immediate allergic reaction occurs within 4 hours of receiving the vaccine and could be symptoms such as hives, swelling, or wheezing.**
- If you had an immediate allergic reaction after getting the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, **you should not get the second dose.** Your doctor may refer you to a specialist in allergies and immunology to provide more care or advice.

What if I have had an allergic reaction to other types of vaccines?

- If you have had an immediate allergic reaction—even if it was not severe—to a vaccine or injectable therapy for another disease, **ask your doctor if you should get a COVID-19 vaccine.**
- Your doctor will help you decide if it is safe for you to get vaccinated.

Latest vaccine info:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/allergic-reaction.html>

Coadministration info:
https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html?CDC_AA_reVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fvaccines%2F%2Finfo-by-product%2Fepifreer%2Fclinical-considerations.html

Doctors on the medical staffs practice independently and are not employees or agents of Texas Health hospitals or Texas Health Resources.

What if I have severe allergies not related to vaccines?

- If you have a history of severe allergic reactions 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 medicines by mouth (oral medicines) or a family history of severe allergic reactions may get vaccinated.

What if I have had an allergic reaction to polyethylene glycol (PEG) or polysorbate?

- People who are allergic to polyethylene glycol (PEG) or polysorbate should not get a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Polysorbate is not an ingredient in the COVID-19 vaccine but is closely related to PEG, which is in the vaccines.

Latest information about vaccine reactions 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 make protective antibodies against COVID-19.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine uses a modified version of a different virus as a vector to deliver instructions, in the form of genetic material (a gene), to a cell. The vaccine does not cause infection with either COVID-19 or the virus that is used as the vector. ([CDC](#))

Because the vaccines trigger 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. Other vaccines being studied use inactivated virus. None of these can cause COVID-19.

How long does it take for the vaccine to begin protecting me?

For the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, you can expect to have the full protection that the vaccine provides around 1 to 2 weeks after getting your second dose. For the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, 14 days or more after your dose.

Will I have to get the COVID-19 vaccine every year, like the flu shot?

We won't know how long immunity produced by vaccination lasts until we have a vaccine and more data on how well it works.



This information is current as of 3/31/2021.
Please visit [TexasHealth.org/Vaccine](https://www.texashealth.org/vaccine) for the most up to date COVID-19 vaccine information.

