



COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions December 17, 2020

General Vaccine Information

What is Operation Warp Speed?

Operation Warp Speed is a partnership among components of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department of Defense to help develop, make, and distribute millions of vaccine doses for COVID-19 as quickly as possible while ensuring that the vaccines are safe and that they work. Learn more about Operation Warp Speed by visiting <https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/explaining-operation-warp-speed/index.html>

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, safety, and security threats of Americans both at home and abroad.

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. It can be found at www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/covid2019_vaccination.shtml.

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 — if not for themselves, then for those around them.

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.

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

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidance expects that an authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccine would prevent disease or decrease its severity in at least 50% of people who are vaccinated. In some cases, COVID-19 vaccines may protect against severe disease, but not necessarily prevent mild or asymptomatic infection. If this is the case, an infected person could still spread the virus. This is why it is expected that even after a vaccine becomes available, people will need to use masks and practice social distancing measures for some time.

When will NJ receive the COVID-19 vaccine(s)?

New Jersey began receiving COVID-19 vaccine the week of December 13, 2020 as soon as the vaccine was authorized for use. At first, there may be limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine(s). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Operation Warp Speed (OWS) will work together to continue sending shipments to New Jersey as more doses are produced and become available.

Who is likely to be among the first to receive the vaccine?

Final decisions are being made about use of initially available limited supplies of COVID-19 vaccines. These decisions will be informed by the proven efficacy of the vaccines coming out of Phase 3 trials; recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices; and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other federal agencies. The CDC has provided guidance to states that populations of focus for initial COVID-19 vaccination may include:

- Healthcare personnel likely to be exposed to or treat people with COVID-19
- People at risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including those with underlying medical conditions and people 65 years of age and older
- Other essential workers

Plans will be reviewed and adjusted accordingly once the amount of vaccine coming to New Jersey is known. For more information, see “COVID-19 Vaccine Priority Groups” on https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_vaccination.shtml.

How many shots of COVID vaccine will be needed?

All but one of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in phase 3 clinical trials in the United States use two shots for the initial vaccine series. The other COVID-19 vaccine uses one shot.

Is there a cost for the COVID-19 vaccine?

According to the CDC, “the federal government is committed to providing free or low-cost COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost for the vaccine itself. However, vaccination providers will be able to

charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Most public and private insurance companies will cover that fee so there is no cost for the person getting vaccinated. In addition, people without health insurance can get COVID-19 vaccines at no cost.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

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. 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 social 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.

Is this a “live” virus vaccine?

The first COVID-19 vaccine to arrive in New Jersey is the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA vaccine. It does not contain any virus. The vaccine cannot cause infection with COVID-19, nor can it cause you to infect others. Learn more about this vaccine by reading the COVID-19 EUA Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers at

[https://state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/EUA Pfizer FactSheet for Recipients.pdf](https://state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/EUA_Pfizer_FactSheet_for_Recipients.pdf). There are different types of vaccines being studied, but we will have to wait for results before seeing which vaccines will be available. For detailed information about the various kinds of vaccines, visit <https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/making-vaccines/prevent-covid>

If I receive my first dose in NJ, can I receive my second dose in another state?

Yes, you can receive your two doses in two different states.

Safety Concerns

Will the COVID-19 vaccine be safe and effective?

All vaccines would need to be authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the agency responsible for making sure vaccines are safe and effective. COVID-19 vaccines that are authorized for use have gone through clinical trials involving tens of thousands of participants to determine their safety and efficacy. These clinical trials are being conducted according to the rigorous standards set forth by the FDA. If the FDA determines that a vaccine meets its safety and efficacy standards, it can make these vaccines available for use in the United States by a license approval or Emergency Use Authorization.

[This publication from the FDA](#) provides links to many publicly available resources to learn more about vaccine development and authorization.

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>

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 the COVID-19 vaccine safe for pregnant women? Breastfeeding women?

In early clinical trials of various COVID-19 vaccines, only non-pregnant adults participated. However, clinical trials continue to expand those recruited to participate. Based on data from the expanded clinical trials, groups recommended to receive the vaccines could change in the future. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should discuss their options with their healthcare provider. More information can be found on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html#:~:text=Routine%20testing%20and%20pregnancy,an%20mRNA%20COVID%2D19%20vaccine.>

Can children get the COVID-19 vaccine?

In early clinical trials for various COVID-19 vaccines, only non-pregnant adults participated. However, clinical trials continue to expand those recruited to participate. The groups recommended to receive the vaccines could change in the future.

Can mRNA vaccines change the DNA of a person?

An mRNA vaccine cannot change a person's DNA. An mRNA vaccine causes cells to make viral proteins, in this case it is making proteins found in the SARS-CoV-2 virus which is the virus that causes COVID-19. When the proteins are made, they are released from the cell and cells from the immune system recognize them as foreign and attack them, creating an immune response. Since mRNA is active only in a cell's cytoplasm and DNA is located in the nucleus, mRNA vaccines do not operate in the same part of the cell where DNA is located. The mRNA would not change a person's DNA.

Can mRNA vaccines cause infertility?

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine causes infertility.

Vaccine Availability

What should I do to protect myself since the COVID vaccine is not available?

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](#).

Will the vaccine be available to everyone in New Jersey?

Yes, eventually the COVID-19 vaccine will be available to everyone who wants it in New Jersey. Final decisions are being made about the use of initially available limited supplies of COVID-19 vaccines. Certain populations who have been determined to be at especially high risk such as health care workers, long-term care residents, essential workers, etc. will be prioritized in a phased approach to receive the vaccine before it becomes widely available to the general public. These decisions will be informed by the efficacy of the vaccines demonstrated in the Phase 3 clinical trials; recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices; and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other federal agencies. The CDC has provided guidance to states that populations of focus for initial COVID-19 vaccination may include:

- Healthcare personnel likely to be exposed to or treat people with COVID-19. (Phase 1A)
- Other essential workers (Phase 1B)
- People at risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including those with underlying medical conditions and people 65 years of age and older (Phase 1C)

The Department is developing plans to distribute vaccines in a fair, ethical, and transparent way and relying on guidance from federal agencies. Plans will be reviewed and adjusted accordingly once the amount of vaccine coming to New Jersey is known. For more information, see “COVID-19 Vaccine Priority Groups” on https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_vaccination.shtml.

Protection from Vaccine/Efficacy

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

It usually takes about one to two weeks for immunity to develop following vaccination, but the specific timeline for any coronavirus vaccine will depend to some extent on which type of vaccine it is. Full immunity is not expected until at least one week after the second dose. So it is important to receive both doses for full protection.

If I had COVID-19 antibody serology done and have antibodies, do I still need to get vaccinated?

There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again; this is called natural immunity. Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, but more studies are needed to better understand this. According to the CDC, data from phase 2/3 clinical trials suggest that Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is safe and likely efficacious in persons with evidence of a prior SARS-CoV-2 infection. Vaccination should be offered to persons regardless of history of prior symptomatic or asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection. Viral testing to assess

for acute SARS-CoV-2 infection or serologic testing to assess for prior infection solely for the purposes of vaccine decision-making is not recommended.

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

There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again; this is called natural immunity. Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, but more studies are needed to better understand this. According to the CDC, data from phase 2/3 clinical trials suggest that Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is safe and likely efficacious in persons with evidence of a prior SARS-CoV-2 infection. Vaccination should be offered to persons regardless of history of prior symptomatic or asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection. Viral testing to assess for acute SARS-CoV-2 infection or serologic testing to assess for prior infection solely for the purposes of vaccine decision-making is not recommended.

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 Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine administered simultaneously with other vaccines the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine series should be administered alone, with a minimum interval of 14 days before or after administration with any other vaccines. If Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is inadvertently administered within 14 days of another vaccine, doses do not need to be repeated for either vaccine.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine take the place of the pneumonia vaccine or the flu vaccine?

No, the COVID-19 vaccine does not take the place of the pneumonia vaccine or the flu vaccine. It is a good idea to be up to date on pneumonia and flu vaccines in addition to COVID-19. Please consult with your health care provider regarding which vaccines are recommended for you.

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.

Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine

This section contains information specific to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine which is the first to be offered in New Jersey. For more detailed information, refer to the COVID-19 EUA Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers at

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

Who should get the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine?

FDA as authorized the use of this vaccine in individuals 16 years of age and older.

Who should not get the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine?

You should not get this vaccine if you:

- Had a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of this vaccine
- Had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient of this vaccine

*For more information regarding allergic reactions please refer to the Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/pfizer/clinical-considerations.html> and discuss with your healthcare provider.

What should you tell your health care provider before you get the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine?

Tell the vaccination provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

Have any allergies

- Have a fever
- Have a bleeding disorder or are on a blood thinner
- Are immunocompromised or are on a medicine that affects your immune system
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant
- Are breastfeeding
- Have received another COVID-19 vaccine

What are the ingredients in the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine includes the following ingredients: mRNA, lipids ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6, 1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate), 2 [(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide, 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine, and cholesterol), potassium chloride, monobasic potassium phosphate, sodium chloride, dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate, and sucrose.

Does the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine contain any preservatives or thimerosal?

No, this vaccine does not contain any preservatives or thimerosal.

How is the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine given?

This vaccine will be given to you as in injection into the muscle. The vaccination series is two doses given three weeks apart. If you receive one dose of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, you should receive a second dose of this same vaccine three weeks later to complete the vaccination series.

What are the benefits of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine?

In an ongoing clinical trial, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been shown to prevent COVID-19 following two doses given three weeks apart. The duration of protection against COVID-19 is currently unknown.

What are the risks of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine?

Side effects that have been reported with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine include:

- Injection site pain
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Joint pain
- Fever
- Injection site swelling
- Injection site redness
- Nausea
- Feeling unwell
- Swollen lymph nodes

It is important to know that having these side effects does not mean that the vaccine infected you with COVID-19. The vaccine does not contain the COVID-19 virus and cannot cause you to become infected. These side effects are signs that your body is creating an immune response to COVID-19.

There is a remote chance that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction. A severe allergic reaction would usually occur within a few minutes to one hour after getting a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Swelling of your face and throat
- A fast heartbeat
- A bad rash all over your body
- Dizziness and weakness

These may not be all the possible side effects of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Serious and unexpected side effects may occur. Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is still being studied in clinical trials.

What should I do about side effects?

After receiving the injection, you should be observed for 15 minutes by healthcare staff to monitor any side effects. If you experience a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1, or go to the nearest hospital. Call the vaccination provider or your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

What if I decide not to get the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine?

It is your choice to receive or not receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Should you decide not to receive it, it will not change your standard medical care. You can change your mind at any time if you decide that you want the vaccine.

What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, discuss your options with your healthcare provider.

Additional Information

- https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_vaccination.shtml
- COVID-19 Hotline 1-800-962-1253 or 2-1-1