COVID-19 Vaccine

In December 2020, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration approved emergency use authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines for the Prevention of COVID-19. As distribution gets underway in thousands of pharmacies, pop-up sites and hospitals across the country, here's what you need to know about the vaccine.

Q: When and how can I get the vaccine?

Distribution plans and procedures vary by state, but no matter where you live, demand for the vaccine will initially outweigh its supply; patience will be necessary as priority is given to those facing the highest risk.
Based on recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, an independent panel of medical and public health experts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in December advised prioritizing frontline healthcare personnel and residents of long-term care facilities for the first available doses of the vaccine. However, a growing sense of urgency to speed distribution as deaths climb to their highest levels yet, prompted new guidelines in mid-January that recommend people older than 65 and anyone with preexisting conditions to be included in the earliest waves of vaccination.

Call your state’s Department of Health or visit its website to determine your eligibility and how to register in your community. The website will provide current information about case counts, testing centers and vaccine distribution.

Click [here](https://ChristopherReeve.org/factsheets) to find your state’s website and contact information.

**Q: How much does the vaccine cost?**

The vaccine is free. However, vaccination providers may bill your insurance company for an office visit and/or administration fee for administering the vaccine. For uninsured individuals, providers can instead bill the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Provider Relief Fund.

**Q: What are the differences between the two COVID vaccines?**

Both vaccines have demonstrated an effectiveness of near 95% and report similar side effects. In addition, both vaccines require a second dose, though with slightly different time intervals: Pfizer BioNTech’s booster is currently given 21 days after the initial dose, while Moderna’s is scheduled for 28 days after the initial dose.

The Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are **not** interchangeable. Whichever vaccine you receive as your first dose must be the same for the booster. Keep a record of which vaccine you receive.

**Q: Will I be able to choose which vaccine I get?**

Access to each vaccine will depend on distribution in your community; it is recommended that you take whichever vaccine is available when you are eligible to receive it.

**Q: I’ve already had COVID-19. Do I need the vaccine?**

**Yes.** The CDC recommends that people get vaccinated even if they already had COVID-19. The amount of immunity created by having had COVID-19 is unknown; reinfection, with serious health complications, is possible. However, if you are currently infected with COVID-19, you should not receive the vaccine until you have recovered and the isolation period (20 days for severe cases, 10 days for asymptomatic) has ended.

**Q: Will the vaccine give me COVID-19?**
No. Neither the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine contains SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID 19. The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19.

Q: What are the possible side effects of the vaccine?

Side effects from the vaccine could include redness, swelling or pain at the site of the injection, feeling tired or unwell, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, fever, nausea and/or swollen lymph nodes.

If you experience soreness at the site of the vaccination, moving your arm around can help relieve pain and swelling. Drink plenty of fluids if you have a fever. These symptoms, and all other side effects, can last 24-48 hours.

Contact your doctor if the soreness or redness at the site of the shot increases after 24 hours, or the side effects are worrying you or lasting longer than a couple of days.

Q: What should someone with a spinal cord injury be aware of when receiving the vaccine?

Many people with spinal cord injuries receive shots without any problems. Barring any allergies to ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccine, there is nothing specific to the vaccine that poses a concern for individuals with spinal cord injuries. However, any pain or discomfort below the level of injury potentially caused by side effects could lead to increased blood pressure and trigger autonomic dysreflexia (AD), a potentially life-threatening condition. Symptoms will vary, but signs of AD may include pounding headache, flushed face, sweating above the level of injury, goose flesh below the level of injury, nasal stuffiness, nausea, and a slow pulse (slower than 60 beats per minute).

As a precaution, carry a **Reeve Foundation AD wallet card** (containing baseline blood pressure, level of injury and emergency contacts) to the vaccination and stay on-site for 30 minutes to make certain you feel fine.

Q: What health information should I share with the vaccine provider before getting the vaccine?

Describe all medical conditions, including if you have a bleeding disorder or are on a blood thinner, have any allergies, have a fever, are immunocompromised or take a medicine that affects your immune system, are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, are breastfeeding, or have received another COVID-19 vaccine.

Q: Who should not get the vaccine?

Anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in these vaccines or has experienced a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of this vaccine should not receive the vaccine.
Q: What are the ingredients in the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine?

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine contains the following ingredients: messenger ribonucleic acid (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.

Q: What are the ingredients in the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine?

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine contains the following ingredients: messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA), lipids (SM-102, polyethylene glycol [PEG] 2000 dimyristoyl glycerol [DMG], cholesterol, and 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine [DSPC]), tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride, acetic acid, sodium acetate, and sucrose.

Q: I have experienced severe allergic reactions before; should I get the vaccine?

According to the CDC, individuals with a history of severe allergic reactions (including food, pet, venom, environmental and oral medication allergies) that are unrelated to vaccines or injectable medicines should still receive the vaccine.

**Individuals with a history of any level of allergic reaction to other vaccines or injectable medicine should speak with their doctor to determine if it is safe to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.**

Individuals who have had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, or an allergic reaction to polyethylene glycol (PEG) or polysorbate, should not get either of the currently available vaccines.

Severe allergic reaction will generally occur within the hour after receiving the vaccine. Signs include difficulty breathing, swelling of the face and throat, increased heart rate, body rash, and dizziness and weakness. Individuals who have previously had severe allergic reactions should be monitored on-site for 30 minutes after receiving the vaccine.

Q: Should I get both the flu shot and the COVID-19 vaccine?

**Yes.** But it is recommended that the COVID-19 vaccination be given alone, therefore you should separate the vaccinations by 14 days.

Q: After I receive the vaccine, will I still need to wear a mask?

**Yes.** Until community coronavirus rates have decreased and larger numbers of the population have received the vaccine, it will be necessary to continue with existing CDC recommendations. Even after receiving the vaccine, individuals should wear a mask, practice social distancing and wash hands frequently.
**Q: Where is the best place to find out the most current and accurate information about the vaccine?**

It is critical to avoid misinformation about the coronavirus and COVID-19 vaccine. The best place to fact-check and find accurate information is through the frequently updated resource pages at the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov), [Food & Drug Administration](https://www.fda.gov) and [Department of Health and Human Services](https://www.hhs.gov) websites.

**Q: How long does the vaccine protection last?**

The vaccines are too new to know how long vaccine protection lasts. Studies to assess and determine the length of immunity provided will continue as people receive the vaccine.

**Sources:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S Department of Health and Human Services, and U.S Food & Drug Administration

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**Need to talk to someone?**

Our Information Specialists are available to answer your questions.
Call toll-free 1-800-539-7309 Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm ET.
Or [schedule a call](mailto:DIAL@n4a.org) or [ask a question online](mailto:DIAL@n4a.org).

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**Resources on COVID-19 Vaccines**


- Administration for Community Living: [Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL)](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/disability/dial)
  DIAL connects callers to information about how to access the COVID-19 vaccine and related supports for people with disabilities. DIAL connects callers to vaccine sites and provides information related to barriers to vaccination. Phone: 888-677-1199 or email: DIAL@n4a.org


- Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation webinar by Nurse Linda on COVID-19 Vaccines 12/30/20

- Food and Drug Administration: [COVID-19 Vaccines](https://www.fda.gov/coronavirus)


Visit [ChristopherReeve.org/factsheets](https://www.christopherreeve.org/factsheets) for more resources | Updated: 1/21/2021
Fees Not Covered by Insurance
The US Department of Health and Human Services, through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is announcing a new program covering costs of administering COVID-19 vaccines to patients enrolled in health plans that either do not cover vaccination fees or cover them with patient cost-sharing. Since providers cannot bill patients for COVID-19 vaccination fees, this new program, the COVID-19 Coverage Assistance Fund (CAF), addresses an outstanding compensation need for providers on the front lines vaccinating underinsured patients.

HHS Office of Civil Rights Factsheet: Disability Access in Vaccine Distribution

HHS Office of Civil Rights Guidance on Federal Legal Standards Prohibiting Disability Discrimination in COVID-19 Vaccination Programs

HRSA: COVID-19 Vaccine Poster for Patients
Has info for patients on what to do if you are billed without insurance as the vaccine should be free to individuals.

HRSA: COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Sheet for Providers
What Health Care Providers Need to Know About COVID-19 Vaccine Fees and Reimbursements

Made to Save
Made to Save is a national grassroots effort to ensure communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic have access to the vaccines and timely information.

Post-Polio Health International: COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Polio Survivors

World Health Organization: COVID-19 Vaccines

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