



# COVID-19 Vaccine and Vaccination

## Frequently Asked Questions

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we sacrificed a lot to keep ourselves, our loved ones and our community safe. By getting a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccination when it's available to you, you can play a role in helping us return to normal day-to-day activities.

### **What vaccines are available to help protect against COVID-19 infection?**

There are now two vaccines — one developed by Pfizer-BioNTech, the other by Moderna — that are both about 95% effective in preventing severe COVID-19 illness. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized the emergency use of both vaccines to prevent the disease in adults.

### **Do I have to get vaccinated against COVID-19?**

There is no federal, state or local government requirement that you get a COVID-19 vaccine when it is available to you.

### **Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccination?**

The vaccine will help keep you and your family safe and healthy. By getting vaccinated, you will also be doing your part to help us eliminate COVID-19 so we can return to normal day-to-day activities.

COVID-19 can cause mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include fever or chills; cough; shortness of breath; fatigue; muscle or body aches; headache; new loss of taste or smell; sore throat; congestion or runny nose; nausea or vomiting; diarrhea.

### **How is the vaccine given?**

Both the Moderna and the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are given in two-doses – either 21 or 28 days apart – depending on which vaccine is given. The vaccine is injected into a muscle, usually an arm muscle near the shoulder. After getting vaccinated, and in case of an adverse reaction, you are asked to wait for at least 15 minutes before leaving the vaccination site.

### **Who should NOT get vaccinated?**

If you have a severe allergic reaction to any of the ingredients in the vaccine, you should not be vaccinated. Additionally, you should not get a second dose of the vaccine if you had a severe allergic reaction after the first dose.

### **What are the side effects of the vaccine?**

While many people have no side-effects, these vaccines may cause mild side effects, especially after the second dose. These side effects might include:

- Injection site reactions: pain, tenderness and swelling of the lymph nodes in the same arm of the injection, swelling (hardness), and redness

- General side effects: fatigue, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, nausea and vomiting, and fever

These side effects generally last for 24-48 hours and are a sign that the vaccine is working.

These may not be all the possible side effects since the vaccine is still being studied in clinical trials.

There is a remote chance that the vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction within a few minutes to one hour after getting an injection. 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.

### **Once I get a COVID-19 vaccination, how long is it good for?**

While both vaccines have been shown to prevent COVID-19, the length of that protection is currently unclear. We do not yet know if individuals will need to get vaccinated every year or whether the vaccine will provide protection for a longer duration.

### **Can the Moderna or the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines give you COVID-19?**

No. Neither vaccine contains the virus that causes COVID-19 and neither vaccine can give you COVID-19.

### **When can I get my vaccine in Montana?**

At this time, vaccine supply across the state is limited and the state of Montana has developed a phased approach to vaccination. The first phase, which has begun, includes healthcare personnel, long-term care, nursing home and assisted living residents and first responders.

The next group to be vaccinated are people 16 – 69 years old with underlying health conditions such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease, those over 70 years old, and Native Americans and other persons of color who may be at increased risk of complications from COVID-19.

Please check the [covid.riverstonehealth.org](https://covid.riverstonehealth.org) for the most up-to-date information on vaccination phases and which phase you are in.

### **How do I find out when it's my turn and who will give the vaccination?**

The Unified Health Command will communicate through various means – print, radio, TV, websites, social media – about who can get the vaccine, where and when.

### **What does the COVID-19 vaccine cost?**

Doses of COVID-19 Moderna and the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines were purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars and are free. However, some vaccine providers may charge an administration fee for the vaccine that can be billed to most insurance plans.

### **If I've already had COVID-19, do I need to be vaccinated?**

Yes. Public health experts advise getting vaccinated even if you have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past. While having the virus probably protects you from getting the virus again within a few

months, no one knows how long the protection lasts. Current evidence suggests that reinfection is uncommon within 90 days after the initial infection.

### **Can I get a COVID-19 vaccination if I currently have COVID-19?**

If you are currently infected with COVID-19, you should wait to get vaccinated until after the illness has resolved and your isolation period has ended.

### **Once I'm vaccinated, can I still get COVID-19?**

The vaccines currently available are about 95% effective and some people may still get infected with COVID-19. Once the second dose of vaccine is given, it will take a week or two to be considered fully vaccinated.

### **Once I'm vaccinated, can I stop wearing a mask and physical distancing?**

No. While both available vaccines are about 95% effective, that still means you have a 5% chance of falling ill if you are exposed to someone who has the virus. You should also wear a mask and practice physical distancing to protect others, since you could have no symptoms and be shedding virus despite the vaccination.

### **If I've been vaccinated for COVID-19 and am a close contact of someone who has COVID-19, do I still have to quarantine?**

Yes. Because there is limited information on how well the vaccine works in the general population; how much it may reduce disease, severity or transmission; and how long protection lasts, once vaccinated you should continue to follow all current guidance to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 including quarantining if you are a close contact of someone who has tested positive.

### **What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?**

You should discuss vaccination concerns with your healthcare provider to weigh the pros and cons of being vaccinated. While the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines were not studied in pregnant or breastfeeding women, it is unlikely that they would pose an elevated risk to this population. .

### **How old do you have to be to get a COVID-19 vaccination?**

The Moderna vaccine is authorized for use in people 18 years and older. The Pfizer-BioNTech is available to people 16 years and older. Children were not included in the initial trials and the vaccines are not authorized for children at this point.

### **Will COVID-19 vaccines affect COVID-19 test results?**

COVID-19 vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech will not affect PRC or antigen tests. These are the tests that typically require swabbing of your nostrils. COVID-19 vaccination will affect the results of antibody tests as the detection of antibodies represents your immune system's response to the vaccine.

### **Once I get my COVID-19 vaccination, what should I do with my vaccination card?**

Remember to bring the vaccination card you receive with your first dose when you return for your second dose of the vaccine.

### **What is V-safe and how do I enroll?**

V-safe is a new voluntary smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to check in with vaccinated people and identify potential side effects. V-safe helps the CDC monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines. V-safe also provides reminders about second doses and telephone follow-up if participants report a significant side effect. After receiving your vaccination, you can enroll in V-safe using a smartphone. For more information, visit: [cdc.gov/vsafe](https://cdc.gov/vsafe).

### **Where is my vaccination information recorded?**

The vaccination provider may include your vaccination information in Montana's Immunization Information System. This will ensure that you receive the same vaccine when you return for the second dose.

### **Where can I find more information about the current COVID-19 vaccines?**

Click on the links below to find more information on the two vaccines that are authorized and recommended to prevent COVID-19:

- [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine](#)

### **What is an Emergency Use Authorization and is it safe?**

The FDA has made the vaccine available under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUS) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The criteria for emergency use includes that there are no adequate, approved and available alternatives. The FDA decision is based on the scientific evidence available showing that the product may be effective to prevent COVID-19 and that the known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks.

For more information on Emergency Use Authorizations, visit the FDA at:

<https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-legal-regulatory-and-policy-framework/emergency-use-authorization>

