



COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

October 21, 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, working closely with health departments and partners to prepare for when a vaccine is available. 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 submit a vaccine plan to the CDC on October 16, 2020. This plan encompasses suggested priority groups for vaccination, logistics of vaccine storage and handling, health care provider recruitment, tracking and reporting of immunizations, etc.

Since no vaccine is currently available, we are closely following progress on COVID-19 vaccine trials and potential U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized vaccine(s). The Department will continue to update the plan as we receive new information and federal guidance.

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 infection, 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.

How many COVID-19 vaccines are under development?

Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are under development. As of October 13, 2020, four vaccines have begun large-scale (phase 3) clinical trials in the United States. For additional information, please see the WHO website at https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIroXC2uvD7AIVNgiICR3pCg1tEAAYAiAAEgJi7_D_BwE

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

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 get those first vaccines doses out once a vaccine is authorized or approved and recommended. New Jersey will receive an allocation of vaccine from the federal government when the vaccine is authorized or approved. When a safe and effective vaccine(s) is available, it will be distributed in a manner that is fair, ethical, transparent and timely for New Jerseyans.

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 trails; 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.

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?

There are different types of vaccines being tested, 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>

Can mRNA vaccines change the DNA of a person?

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.

Safety Concerns

Will the COVID-19 vaccine be safe and effective?

There are many vaccines currently undergoing clinical trials. We are closely following the progress of these trials and will know more once those studies conclude. It’s typical for most vaccine candidates to not make it to the final stages of testing, so we do not expect 100% of all COVID-19 vaccine candidates to come to market.

Any vaccine would need to be authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the agency responsible for making sure vaccines are safe and effective.

[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 for 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.

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.

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?

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

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.

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.

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. While vaccine trials are being completed, it will be important for scientists to continue learning about COVID-19, particularly whether people who got sick with COVID-19 can be re-infected. The current vaccine trials will include immunizing people who have never been infected with SARS-CoV-2 as well as those who have been previously infected. We will soon know whether vaccination of those who have been previously infected affords more complete or longer lasting protection than those who have been previously infected but haven't been vaccinated. Once a vaccine has been authorized or approved, ACIP will make recommendations to CDC on who should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

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. Until we have a vaccine available and know more about natural immunity to COVID-19, CDC cannot comment on whether people who had COVID-19 should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Once a vaccine has been authorized or approved, ACIP will make recommendations to CDC on who should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Other Vaccines

Can I get the flu shot and the new COVID-19 vaccine on the same day?

Clinical trials for the COVID-19 vaccines did not include testing safety of getting the flu vaccine on the same day so it is best to talk to your health care provider about how far apart they should be spaced.

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.