

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccine

What type of vaccines are there?

Several different types of vaccines are in the development. Two have received FDA Emergency Use of Approval - Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna. Both vaccines use the same mRNA technology and do not contain live virus. For more information on mRNA vaccine and how it works please visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

When can I receive the vaccine?

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) has laid out plans for dissemination of the vaccine. Needham Public Health will follow the same dissemination plan as the State. As of January 12, 2021, the state is in Phase 1 of vaccine distribution.

Please visit [When can I Get the COVID-19 Vaccine](#) for a more detailed plan and to see what group you qualify for.

Who should get the vaccine?

The Pfizer vaccine is approved for anyone 16 years of age and older.

The Moderna vaccine is approved for adults 18 years of age and older.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women who are healthcare workers should consider getting the vaccine. Currently, however, there is currently no data on how the vaccine affects pregnancy. Anyone with previous allergic reactions to other vaccines should consult with their healthcare provider to determine how they can safely receive the vaccine.

I have a history of allergies. Is the vaccine safe for me?

The CDC considers any history of allergies as a precaution, but not a reason to avoid getting the vaccine. Individuals with allergies to medications, foods, environmental allergens, insects and latex have the same risk of having an allergic reaction to the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines as the general population.

When you get your vaccine, the site will monitor you for 15 minutes (30 minutes if you have a history of allergies) to ensure that any adverse reaction can be identified and addressed promptly.

Be sure to talk to the provider administering your vaccine about any concerns you may have with allergies prior to receiving the injection.

Why should I get the vaccine?

The vaccine does not guarantee you immunity from the virus itself, but the COVID-19 vaccine protects you from getting severely ill from the virus if you do contract it. If you do contract the virus, your symptoms should be mild, and you should not need hospital level of care.

How is the vaccine administered?

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Pfizer Vaccine: The dose of the vaccine is 0.3ml, which is less than the regular flu vaccine. It is a two-dose vaccine, meaning you will need to get two doses in order to receive the desired effect. Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine doses are given 21-days apart.

Moderna Vaccine: The dose of the vaccine is 0.5mL, same as the flu shot. It is a two-dose vaccine, meaning that you will need to get two doses in order to receive the desired effect. The Moderna vaccine is given 28 days apart.

BOTH: are given in the muscle of the arm just like the flu vaccine. Your second vaccination should be scheduled before you leave the clinic after your first dose. The vaccine cannot be given within 14 days of other vaccines!

I had COVID-19, should I get the vaccine?

Even if you have previously had Covid-19, it is recommended that you receive the vaccine. You may defer vaccination for up to 90 days after contracting the virus as the antibodies are thought to protect you during that time and reinfection is rare. However, if you are in the middle of active illness, you should fully recover from that prior to receiving the vaccine. Also, if you have had antibody treatment to treat COVID-19 (monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma) it is recommended you speak with your healthcare provider prior to receiving the vaccine.

Is there a cost associated with the vaccine?

There is no charge for the vaccine. Some facilities may ask for insurance information to bill for administration. This helps to cover the cost of staff and resources, but there will be no cost to the recipient. Anyone can receive the vaccine regardless of insurance status.

What if I have underlying medical conditions? Should I still get the vaccine?

Currently there is no data on how the vaccine affects those with HIV, other compromising conditions, or those who take immune suppressive medications. It is recommended you speak with your healthcare provider and consider the level of transmission in your community and your personal risk of contracting COVID-19.

Should I receive the vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding please speak with your healthcare provider about whether you should receive the vaccine. There have been no studies done about COVID-19 vaccine on pregnant or breastfeeding women. There currently is no safety data presented on how it may affect pregnancy. Your healthcare provider can help you determine your exposure risk and whether you should be vaccinated.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

There have been very few side effects from the vaccine after the first dose. Majority of side effects during clinical trials were reported after the second dose of vaccine was given. They usually developed within 24-72 hours from the vaccine injection and resolved within 24-48 hours. Common symptoms after vaccination were soreness at the injection site, headache, fatigue, muscle aches (myalgia), and fever. All these symptoms are indicators that your body is reacting properly to the vaccine and is busy building antibodies.

I got the vaccine. Now what?

Thank you for protecting yourself from the virus! Your body will take about two weeks to build up antibodies so during this time you are still vulnerable to contracting the virus. As it takes several months to get enough people protected, we all will need to continue to adhere to mask wearing, hand washing, and keeping our distance from other people.

I got the vaccine and now I tested positive for COVID-19

Getting the vaccine will not cause you to test positive for COVID-19 nor does it prevent you from getting the virus. Rather, the vaccine protects you from getting severely ill from the virus. Currently there is not enough data to determine whether the vaccine will prevent you from passing the virus to others. So, if you test positive for COVID-19 after receiving the vaccine you will be treated as a positive case and will have to isolate according to the current guidelines. If you have been identified as a close contact of someone who has COVID-19 you will need to quarantine according to the current guidelines. As more data becomes available and larger numbers of people are vaccinated this guidance may change.

General Guidance for Business

Individuals will be vaccinated according to the priority list created by the State and generally this will break down the workforce automatically into sections. However, if all your workforce qualifies to receive the vaccine at the same time it is recommended to stagger vaccinations. The vaccine might cause a short lived (24-72hrs) immune response in some individuals that make coming to work impossible (see the above section on Post-Vaccination Symptoms). This way your business can still function while some of your workforce is recovering.