

Frequently Asked Questions COVID-19 Vaccine

Q: Is there a COVID-19 vaccine?

A: In the United States, two COVID-19 vaccines have been granted emergency use authorization (EUA) from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These vaccines, manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, began arriving in Ohio in December 2020.

Q: Why is a COVID-19 vaccine needed if social distancing and wearing masks prevent the COVID-19 virus from spreading?

A: Getting us through the 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, the coming COVID-19 vaccines and proper prevention measures will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

Q: How many COVID-19 vaccines are under development?

A: Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are under development. As of Dec. 21, 2020, two vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) have been granted emergency use authorization (EUA) from the FDA. Large-scale (Phase 3) clinical trials are in progress or being planned for additional COVID-19 vaccines in the United States.

Q: How many doses of COVID-19 vaccine will be needed? When is the second dose due?

A: Both the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna vaccine, which have been granted emergency use authorization, require two doses. Ohioans who receive a dose of a particular vaccine must receive a second dose of the vaccine from the same manufacturer, as they are not interchangeable. For example, if you receive a first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, your second dose must be the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine administered 21 days after the first dose. If you receive a first dose of the Moderna vaccine, your second dose must be the Moderna vaccine, administered 28 days after the first dose. These recommended intervals, with a standard four-day grace period, should be followed as closely as possible to receive full protection. If the intervals are exceeded, the second dose should be administered at the earliest opportunity. Doses would not need to be repeated due to a longer interval, meaning you do not have to start over, according to [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) guidance](#). There is a vaccine in development and Phase 3 clinical trials that uses one dose.

Q: How will I know that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe?

A: The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Safety is a top priority while federal partners work to make a coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccine(s) available. Clinical trials study the effectiveness of the vaccine in thousands of study participants. Data from these trials will be provided to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to determine vaccine safety and effectiveness. The FDA uses rigorous standards during the evaluation, and if it determines that a vaccine meets its safety and effectiveness requirements, it can make these available by approval or emergency use authorization. After FDA makes its determination, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will review available data before making final vaccine recommendations to the CDC. There have been no shortcuts in the vaccine development process. The COVID-19 vaccine development process involved several steps comparable with those used to develop other vaccines, such as the flu or measles vaccine.

Q: Will Ohio make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory?

A: No. The vaccine will be available, as supplies allow, to all Ohioans who choose to receive the vaccine.

Q: Who is paying for the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: The federal government is committed to providing free or low-cost COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine doses purchased with taxpayer dollars will be given to Ohioans who choose to receive them at no cost.

Q: Will there be enough vaccine for everyone in Ohio?

A: During the early phases of administration of COVID-19 vaccines in the United States, supply will be limited. This would mean that not everyone will be able to be vaccinated right away, but, in time, as vaccination production ramps up, every Ohioan who chooses may receive a vaccine as soon as large quantities are available.

Q: Are there special considerations on who will receive the COVID-19 first in Ohio?

A: At first, there will be a limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine, with a phased approach to offering the vaccines. However, it is important that the initial vaccines are given to people in a fair, ethical, and transparent way. Those who are at highest risk of contracting and transmitting the virus will be among the first to be vaccinated.

Q: Who can get the vaccine first in Ohio?

A: Initially, there will be a limited number of vaccines available, and Ohio is committed to making it widely available for those that want to receive it, as quickly as possible, as shipments of vaccine arrive. In conjunction with the recommendations of medical experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), Ohio has identified who will be among the first to receive those very early shipments in Phase 1A, should they choose to be vaccinated, listed below.

- Healthcare workers and personnel who are routinely involved in the care of COVID-19 patients.
- Residents and staff in nursing homes.
- Residents and staff in assisted living facilities.
- Patients and staff at state psychiatric hospitals.
- People with developmental disabilities and those with mental health disorders, including substance use disorders, who live in group homes, residential facilities, or centers, and staff at those locations.
- Residents and staff at our two state-run homes for Ohio veterans.
- EMS responders.

The goals of Phase 1B are to save lives and to have students back in school full-time by March 1. This phase will specifically include:

- Ohioans age 65 and up.
- Younger people with severe congenital, developmental, or early-onset medical disorders that make them particularly vulnerable – such as cerebral palsy; spina bifida; congenital heart disease; type 1 diabetes; inherited metabolic disorders; severe neurologic disorders including epilepsy; severe genetic disorders including Down Syndrome, Fragile X, Prader Willi Syndrome, Turner Syndrome; severe lung disease including cystic fibrosis and severe asthma; sickle cell anemia, alpha and beta thalassemia.
- Adults/employees in all schools that want to go back, or to remain, educating in person.

The vaccine distribution plan for future priority populations are still under development and will be shared publicly as soon as they are finalized. As more information becomes available on who can receive the vaccine, and when they can receive the vaccine, we will communicate this information publicly through the news media and share information at coronavirus.ohio.gov/vaccine.

Q: How many vaccines are available?

A: Vaccine manufacturers are working hard to manufacture and distribute vaccines safely, quickly, and effectively. Each state will be informed, on a weekly basis, of how many vaccine doses they will receive that week.

Q: If I am in an eligible audience, how will I know when I can get the vaccine during Phase 1A? Who do I call?

A: We are working closely with vaccine providers and local health departments at this time to determine the best process for eligible audiences to use during the initial vaccination phase. During Phase 1A, the following providers will be responsible for distributing vaccines to the following audiences:

- Essential workers in healthcare settings – hospitals, local health departments, and health systems.
- Long-term care/nursing home residents and staff – the federal pharmacy distribution program, administered by CVS, Walgreens, PharmScript, and Absolute Pharmacy.
- Congregate care staff and residents, EMS first responders, any remaining long-term care facility staff – local health departments.

Q: I am not in one of the audiences that has been announced. When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: Initially, there will be a limited number of vaccines available, so we are committed to making it widely available for those that want to receive it as quickly as possible as shipments of the COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Ohio. Ohio continues to make plans for a way to distribute vaccines in a way that is fair, ethical, and transparent, in conjunction with the recommendations of medical experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). As more information becomes available on who can receive the vaccine when we will communicate this information publicly, including through the news media, and share information at coronavirus.ohio.gov/vaccine.

Q: What is the difference between an emergency use authorization (EUA) and an approval from the FDA?

A: An Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) authorizes the use of an unapproved medical product, or unapproved use of an approved medical product, for use during a public health emergency if the benefits of its use outweigh any known or potential risks. Both Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccines have been granted EUA following rigorous review. In the past, EUAs have been issued for products, devices, and drugs related to Ebola, H1N1, Zika, and others. The EUAs are valid until the pandemic is over, the FDA revokes the EUAs, or the products are approved for traditional licensure by the FDA. The FDA closely monitors each vaccine for safety after the EUA is issued. Drug manufacturers are encouraged to obtain traditional FDA licensed vaccine approval as soon as possible.

Q: When will the other distribution phases begin?

A: As vaccine supply increases, Ohio will continue to vaccinate Ohioans who choose to receive the vaccine. The speed at which Ohio will move through the phases depends on the number of vaccines available.

Q: Will my children be able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is currently recommended for patients age 16 and up, and the Moderna vaccine is currently recommended for patients age 18 and up. As more information becomes available on children and COVID-19 vaccines from the FDA, CDC, and vaccine manufacturers, it will be made available at coronavirus.ohio.gov/vaccine.

Q: If I already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available?

A: Not enough is known about how long natural immunity lasts for those that have recovered from the virus. Until we have a vaccine available and know more about natural immunity to COVID-19, the CDC will not comment on whether people who had COVID-19 should get a COVID-19 vaccine. The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will make recommendations to CDC on who should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Q: Can other vaccines help prevent me from getting COVID-19?

A: Other vaccines, such as those for flu, measles, or other diseases, will not protect you from COVID-19. Only the vaccines designed specifically to protect you from COVID-19, once approved for use by the FDA, can prevent COVID-19. While a flu vaccine will not prevent you from getting COVID-19, it can prevent you from getting influenza (flu) at the same time as COVID-19. Because the flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading during this time, getting a flu vaccine will be more crucial than ever.

Q: What is Operation Warp Speed?

A: Operation Warp Speed is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Defense to help develop, produce, and distribute millions of vaccine doses for COVID-19 as quickly as possible while ensuring that vaccines are safe and effective. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is focused on vaccine planning, working closely with the Ohio Department of Health and other state partners to prepare for vaccination availability.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.