



## **COVID-19 Vaccination Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 disease is caused by a coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. It is predominantly a respiratory illness that can affect other organs. People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms ranging from mild to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms 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.

### **Why is it important to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Administration of the COVID-19 vaccine is an effort to build immunity to the COVID-19 virus, thus reducing its spread.

### **What is different about the COVID-19 vaccine?**

mRNA vaccines are a new type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. To trigger an immune response, many vaccines put a weakened or inactivated germ into our bodies. Not mRNA vaccines. Instead, they teach our cells how to make a protein—or even just a piece of a protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.

### **How is the COVID-19 vaccine administered?**

The vaccine is administered as two injections into muscle. It is important that an individual receive the second injection from the same vaccine manufacturer as was administered for the first injection. The Pfizer vaccine is administered in two doses 21 days apart. The Moderna vaccine is administered in two doses 28 days apart. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is single dose.

### **Which vaccine are NCH and its affiliates receiving?**

The first supply of vaccines received were manufactured by Pfizer. NCH and its affiliates have since also received the Moderna vaccine. At this time, we have not received any Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

## When did the vaccine become available for administration at NCH affiliates?

North Country Healthcare (NCH) hospitals received their initial supply of vaccines on Tuesday, December 15, 2020. Administration of the vaccine to their phase 1a high risk employees began shortly thereafter. Since that time, public vaccination clinics have been conducted.

## Who is currently eligible to receive the vaccines?

Currently, NH residents who meet Phase 1A or Phase 1B criteria may receive the vaccine. It is anticipated that registration for NH residents who meet the Phase 2A criteria will begin March 17, 2021. It's also anticipated that registration for NH residents who meet the criteria of Phase 2B will begin March 22, 2021.

## When will I be able to get my vaccine?

Currently, NH residents who meet Phase 1A or Phase 1B criteria may receive the vaccine. It is anticipated that registration for NH residents who meet the Phase 2A criteria will begin March 17, 2021. It's also anticipated that registration for NH residents who meet the criteria of Phase 2B will begin March 22, 2021.

**When can I get a COVID-19 VACCINE in NH?**

Updated: 1/14/2021

Phase	Eligibility Criteria	Timeline
<b>PHASE 1</b>	<b>PHASE 1A</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>High-risk health workers</li><li>First responders</li><li>Older adults living in residential care settings</li></ul> <b>PHASE 1B</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>People ≥ 65 years old</li><li>Medically vulnerable at <i>significantly</i> higher risk with 2 or more conditions<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Family caregivers of those medically vulnerable persons, ≤16 years old not eligible for vaccine</li></ul></li><li>Residents and staff of residential facilities for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities</li><li>Corrections officers and staff working in correctional facilities</li><li>First responders and health workers not already vaccinated</li></ul>	DECEMBER - MARCH*
<b>PHASE 2</b>	<b>PHASE 2A</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>K-12 school and childcare staff</li></ul> <b>PHASE 2B</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>People 50 - 64 years old</li></ul>	MARCH - MAY*
<b>PHASE 3</b>	<b>PHASE 3A</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Medically vulnerable &lt;50 years old at <i>moderately</i> higher risk with 1 or more conditions</li></ul> <b>PHASE 3B</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Everyone else not already vaccinated</li></ul>	MAY and BEYOND*

**Additional details are coming soon.**  
Contact 2-1-1 for more information and visit [nh.gov/covid19](https://nh.gov/covid19) for updates.

\*Estimated time frame depends on vaccine doses allocated to NH from the federal government and vaccine uptake.

## What is the cost of the vaccine?

There is no charge to you to receive the vaccine.

## **How safe is the vaccine?**

The COVID-19 vaccines have undergone clinical trials which tested for both safety and efficacy. The FDA has authorized use of the Pfizer vaccine to prevent COVID-19 in individuals 16 years of age and older. The FDA has authorized use of the Moderna vaccine to prevent COVID-19 in individuals 18 years of age and older. The FDA has authorized emergency use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

## **What is an emergency use authorization?**

Drugs and vaccines have to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ensure that only safe and effective products are available to the American public. In situations when there is good scientific reason to believe that a drug is safe and is likely to treat or prevent disease, the FDA may authorize its use even if definitive proof of the efficacy of the drug is not known, especially for diseases that cause high mortality. Emergency use authorizations were granted by the FDA Commissioner for chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine (later revoked) and for the use of convalescent plasma to treat hospitalized patients with COVID-19. Many are concerned that Emergency Use Authorization for a vaccine could be issued prematurely, before sufficient safety and efficacy data have been generated through phase 3 clinical trials. It is important to emphasize that the bar for ensuring safety of a vaccine is higher than for a therapeutic to treat an ill person. Vaccines are given to potentially millions of healthy people, unlike drugs for sick people, and loss of trust in a vaccine for SARS-CoV-2 could spill over into loss of trust in other vaccines, seriously jeopardizing public health.

## **Is the vaccine a live vaccine?**

No. There is no live virus in the vaccine.

## **What is the efficacy of the vaccine?**

Following two doses from the same manufacturer, recent clinical trials have shown the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to be 95% and 94% effective respectively in preventing COVID-19, and the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to be 85% effective, after its single dose, in preventing serious disease across all regions studied.

## **Should I get the vaccine?**

NCH encourages you to speak with your healthcare provider about your risk factors and interest in receiving the vaccine. Take this time to research reputable sources such as CDC or manufacturer and ask any questions about the vaccine.

## **If I already had COVID-19, should I still get a vaccine?**

Even if you have recovered from COVID-19, you can still benefit from vaccination. There is evidence in hospitalized patients that the infection was so overwhelming that the immune response became exhausted and so immune memory to the virus was not created efficiently. Also, if you had a very mild infection, your immune system may not have reached the point of laying down immune memory. Therefore, vaccination could be beneficial, regardless of whether you experienced severe or mild disease.

## What are common side effects of the vaccine?

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle Pain
- Joint Pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Reactions at the injection site

## What should I do if I experience side effects?

Call 9-1-1 or go to your nearest hospital if you experience a severe allergic reaction.

If you experience non-emergent side effects which bother you or which persist, please contact your healthcare provider.

Track all side effects via CDC's **v-safe** app, referenced below.

## What should I alert the vaccine administrator to before I receive the vaccine:

- Allergies
- Fever
- Bleeding Disorder / being on a blood thinner
- Immunocompromised / on a medicine which affects your immune system
- Pregnancy / planning to become pregnant (see below)
- Breastfeeding
- Have received another COVID-19 vaccine
- Have received the Influenza vaccine or any other vaccine within the previous 14 days

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

- After an evidence-based review of all available data, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) issued interim recommendations for use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in persons aged  $\geq 16$  years for the prevention of COVID-19 ([CDC 2020](#)) and the use of the Moderna-1273 COVID-19 vaccine in persons aged  $\geq 18$  years ([CDC 2020](#)).
- ACOG recommends that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant individuals who meet criteria for vaccination based on ACIP-recommended priority groups.
- COVID-19 vaccines should be offered to lactating individuals similar to non-lactating individuals when they meet criteria for receipt of the vaccine based on prioritization groups outlined by the ACIP.

- NCH highly recommends having a conversation with your Obstetrics clinician.

## Who do I contact to receive the vaccine?

Watch for local COVID-19 vaccine clinic postings as we receive vaccines in 2021.

## If I receive the vaccine, should I still wear a facemask?

Yes, for several reasons:

- The effect of vaccinations are not generally immediate.
- It remains uncertain if the vaccines protect the recipient from the infection, or just the symptoms.
- It will take several months to administer the vaccine to all those who wish to be vaccinated.

## I got vaccinated. Now what?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is asking everyone who receives a COVID-19 vaccine to download and use their new app, **v-safe**. According to the CDC website, the app:

*uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after you receive a COVID-19 vaccination. Through **v-safe**, you can quickly tell CDC if you have any side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Depending on your answers, someone from CDC may call to check on you and get more information. And **v-safe** will remind you to get your second COVID-19 vaccine dose if you need one.*

## Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

The NH Department of Health and Human Services website:

<https://www.nh.gov/covid19/index.htm>

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration

<https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>