

## Envision Healthcare Resource: COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ

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As a national medical group, the health and safety of all our teammates are our top priority. We have reviewed information communicated by state and federal health authorities and reporting by national press to produce a thorough and unbiased resource of frequently asked COVID-19 vaccine questions.

Please note that information about vaccine approvals, effectiveness, distribution and more is continually evolving. We are providing the best guidance we can with the information we have. We will continue to monitor progress on the vaccines and update this resource as additional information becomes available.

We encourage clinicians to remain in close contact with their leaders and facilities for the most current information on when and where to receive the vaccination. If you have questions for the Envision team, please contact us at [VaccineQuestions@EnvisionHealth.com](mailto:VaccineQuestions@EnvisionHealth.com). For additional information, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

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### ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINE

#### 1. What is the status of COVID-19 vaccine development?

Three major pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies have released information about the results of their Phase 3 vaccine trials. The vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for emergency authorization use and are being distributed to communities. Read more about each vaccine, including AstraZeneca's, below:

### **Pfizer and BioNTech**

Efficacy – 95%

Dosage – 2 doses, 3 weeks apart

Injection – Muscle

Status – Pfizer's vaccine was approved by the FDA for emergency authorization use on Dec. 11 and was first administered in the U.S. on Dec. 14.

### **Moderna and National Institutes of Health**

Efficacy – 94.5%

Dosage – 2 doses, 4 weeks apart

Injection – Muscle

Status – Moderna's vaccine was approved by the FDA for emergency authorization use on Dec. 18 and was first administered in the U.S. on Dec. 21.

### **AstraZeneca and University of Oxford**

Efficacy – 60-90%

Dosage – 2 doses; however, timing and amount are still being reviewed

Injection – Muscle

Status – AstraZeneca has yet to submit its vaccine to the FDA for emergency authorization. It is gathering more data on the most successful segment of its trials – the one-and-a-half dose treatment that demonstrated 90% efficacy.

## **2. How do vaccines like the COVID-19 vaccine work?**

To understand how vaccines work, it's important to know how the body typically fights illnesses. When an infection enters the body, white blood cells produce antibodies (germ-fighting tools) required to eradicate the disease. After a first infection, the body remembers that infection by creating "memory cells." When the body encounters the same virus or bacteria again, the body attacks it, usually preventing a second infection. Vaccines work by imitating a viral infection – essentially tricking the body into creating an immune response and antibodies to possible future infections by that virus. For more information, review the [CDC's vaccine resource](#).

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines utilize messenger RNA technology to imitate the COVID-19 virus. The new technology includes a snippet of genetic code from the COVID-19 virus to instruct cells on how to build the spike protein found on the surface of the virus, in turn teaching cells how to recognize and fight real infections.

## **3. How does the FDA approve the COVID-19 vaccines?**

FDA regulators review each new vaccine's effectiveness, safety and manufacturing standards based on trials and follow-up safety data. An FDA vaccine advisory committee then votes on whether to approve a vaccine. The committee is a non-partisan body comprised of scientists, not politically appointed advisors. See the Vaccine Safety and Vaccination Process section below for information on the Emergency Use Authorization process for the COVID-19 vaccines.

## COVID-19 VACCINE AVAILABILITY AND DISTRIBUTION

### 4. Who will likely receive the COVID-19 vaccine first and when?

Each state determines priority distribution for its residents. However, the CDC vaccine committee recommends the nation's nearly 21 million healthcare workers receive the first available doses and individuals working and living in nursing homes and long-term care facilities receive it next.

### 5. Who will likely have the next opportunity to receive the vaccine?

In addition to recommending healthcare workers and individuals working and living in nursing homes receive the vaccine first, the CDC may recommend essential workers receive priority. The states might then prioritize essential workers in different industries, such as grocery stores, agricultural, law enforcement and transportation, who are at a higher risk of contracting the virus. About 87 million Americans qualify as essential workers. These individuals are in disproportionately minority populations that have been significantly impacted by the pandemic.

Following essential workers, the CDC has suggested communities most at risk of contracting and dying from the virus will be next to receive the vaccine. Populations at increased risk include people with auto-immune deficiencies and pre-existing medical conditions (e.g., chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, obesity, weakened immune system, heart failure, coronary artery disease and diabetes) and adults 65 and older. All other adults would be next, with vaccinations for children coming after further studies are conducted on vaccine efficacy and impact.

Remember to check with your local and state authorities for more information on vaccine prioritization and distribution.

### 6. As a clinician, do I need to sign up to receive a vaccine?

The distribution and administration of the vaccine will be phased based on states' priorities and the CDC's recommendations. Some healthcare facilities are asking clinicians to indicate whether they are interested in receiving the vaccination first and if anyone on their team should receive priority vaccination based on risk factors.

### 7. As a clinician, who can I contact to get a vaccine?

As a healthcare worker, you may qualify as a priority recipient of the vaccination. For now, you should contact your site and hospital teams for more information on vaccine distribution and administration. Envision is not currently distributing vaccines. We are evaluating the possibility of distributing the vaccine and will provide updates if this changes.

### 8. When and where can patients expect to receive a vaccine?

Vaccine availability for patients depends on which vaccines receive approval and when. Experts are predicting adults who do not qualify for priority vaccination could likely access one of the approved vaccines by May or June 2021. Availability will also depend on the successful production, transportation, storage and distribution of the vaccine.

### **9. Who will be administering COVID-19 vaccines?**

Many hospitals are currently administering the vaccines because healthcare workers have been identified as individuals with priority vaccination. The distribution will expand as more vaccines are available and could include local pharmacies by the time it is ready for the general public. It is unlikely that Envision office-based practices and ambulatory surgery centers will be administering the vaccine in the near future. We will notify you if this changes.

### **10. I've heard vaccines are difficult to store. How will that affect availability?**

The federal government has been delivering vaccines to specific locations identified by the states. The states are implementing their storage and distribution plans.

Because the Pfizer vaccine must be stored in low temperatures (e.g., the Pfizer vaccine requires storage at -94 degrees Fahrenheit), some questions remain about the storage, transportation and distribution plans, which can pose a challenge for rural and medically underserved communities. Federal and state governments are working to address these logistics.

The Moderna vaccine is easier to store than Pfizer's. It can be kept at -4 degrees Fahrenheit for six months, in a refrigerator at 36-46 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 days and at room temperature for 12 hours, according to Moderna.

### **11. Is the vaccine mandatory?**

Vaccinations are not mandated when they are approved by the FDA. Rather, FDA approval indicates that a vaccine is effective and safe for administration. As more doses of the vaccine and research become available, it will be each state government's decision whether to mandate vaccination and for which populations.

## **ENVISION POLICIES AND RESOURCE**

### **12. Will Envision be procuring and distributing the COVID-19 vaccine?**

At this time, Envision is not identified as a distributor of the vaccine. We are exploring all appropriate avenues to procure approved COVID-19 vaccines. As part of our medical group's commitment to protecting clinicians and caring for patients, our top priority is making sure our clinicians have access to and can receive the vaccinations.

### **13. Will Envision clinicians and clinical support teams be required to get the vaccine?**

Consistent with government policies, COVID-19 vaccination is not mandatory at this time. However, we strongly encourage our clinical and clinical support teammates to consider vaccination. The decision to receive a vaccination is made in consultation with one's primary care provider. For clinicians, some hospitals may require vaccination to practice. Clinicians need to refer to hospital guidelines and make their decision accordingly.

#### **14. What is the role of Envision's vaccine subcommittee?**

The committee is part of Envision's COVID-19 Task Force. Its role is to review safety data, educate teams and provide guidelines and policies for the vaccination of clinicians and clinical support teammates. We are focused on protecting our frontline teammates and advocating that healthcare workers continue to receive prioritization for the vaccination.

## **VACCINE SAFETY AND VACCINATION PROCESS**

#### **15. Can I choose which COVID-19 vaccine I receive?**

The ability to choose a vaccine is unclear at this time. Which vaccine is administered depends on which vaccines being distributed and their availability. It may also be the case that certain vaccines are more effective for specific populations, which could change distribution strategies. States' decisions on distribution and prioritization also play a role in the ability to select which vaccine you receive.

All three vaccines require two doses. The exact dosage of AstraZeneca's vaccine is being reviewed. Once you begin a vaccination course, you cannot switch. For example, if your first dose is of the Pfizer vaccine, you cannot receive the Moderna vaccine for the second dose.

#### **16. Are there any side effects from a COVID-19 vaccination? How will I feel after receiving it?**

Based on the reported results of the clinical trials, it's expected that most people who receive the vaccine will have mild, temporary side effects, which are signs of the body developing an immune response. Documented side effects are similar to those associated with the flu vaccine. Participants in the Pfizer and Moderna trials reported side effects, including pain at the injection site, fever, muscle aches, headaches and fatigue, that generally lasted no more than one to two days. Many who received the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine had their worse symptoms on the second day after the injection.

It is likely that side effects, if any, may be worse and longer in duration after the second dose. These are typical indications that the body's immune system is processing the vaccine correctly. It will be important for clinicians to communicate the safety of the vaccine to patients as well as some of the potential side effects.

#### **17. How do I know the COVID-19 vaccine is safe?**

The FDA has high standards for authorizing vaccines for emergency use. Each company's application includes two months of safety data following the results from their Phase 3 trials.

Phase 3 data for each vaccine includes results from tens of thousands of participants who received the vaccine. Those results are compared to a separate group that received a placebo. For context, the Pfizer vaccine had 44,000 participants in clinical trials and reported no safety concerns.

The FDA has approved the vaccines for Pfizer and Moderna for emergency use authorization.

**18. How long after receiving the COVID-19 vaccination does it take to become immune?**

Typically, it takes two weeks after vaccination for an adult to develop disease-fighting antibodies. However, the three companies' vaccines require boosters or more than one shot during a period of time.

The protection someone gains from having an infection (called natural immunity) varies depending on the disease and a person's body. Since this virus is new, we don't know how long natural immunity might last. We should know more when we have an approved vaccine and more data on how well it works. Experts will continue studying both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity for COVID-19. The CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

**19. I had COVID-19 already. Do I need the COVID-19 vaccine?**

As of now, there is no concrete evidence indicating how long COVID-19 antibodies remain in the body. There have been reports of people contracting COVID-19 more than once. Even if someone has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the recommendation is to receive the vaccination. You should check with your primary care provider before making any decision that impacts your health and well-being, including COVID-19 vaccination.

**20. If I get the COVID-19 vaccine, do I still need to wear a mask, practice social distancing and wash my hands frequently?**

Yes. Even with vaccines available, it is imperative that people continue with the current public health measures. The CDC recommends people wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth when in contact with people outside their household, when in healthcare facilities and when receiving any vaccine, including a COVID-19 vaccine.

As we have seen throughout the pandemic, some people contract COVID-19 without knowing it or experiencing any symptoms, making them more susceptible to passing the virus to other people. Even when people are vaccinated, they might still be a carrier and put other people at risk. This is because the current vaccines are less than 100 percent effective and there is a window of vulnerability between the first and second dose.

**21. If I have additional questions, where can I find more information?**

We encourage clinicians to remain in close contact with their leaders and facilities for the most current information on when and where to receive the vaccination. If you have questions for the Envision team, please contact us at [VaccineQuestions@EnvisionHealth.com](mailto:VaccineQuestions@EnvisionHealth.com). For additional information, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov).