

This running FAQ document will be updated each Wednesday.

Latest update: December 16, 2020

- Language updates in green font

General COVID-19 Vaccine Questions

What can I do to prevent getting COVID-19 until I can get the vaccine?

Practice social distancing, wear a mask when around others, wash your hands, avoid being around others who are sick. For more information about protecting yourself visit the [CDC website](#).

If I tested positive for COVID-19 in the past, do I need to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people who have already been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 90 days may choose to delay getting the vaccine because getting sick with COVID-19 again is unlikely during that time. However, there is no harm in getting the vaccine if you have already had COVID-19. You may also choose to wait to get vaccine in order to allow those who are more high-risk to be vaccinated.

If the vaccine is a two dose vaccine, how will I know when to get the second dose?

At the time of your injection you will receive a card with the date of your first dose, the name/manufacturer of the vaccine you just received, and the date on which you should receive your second dose. Your second dose of COVID-19 vaccine must be from the same product name/manufacturer as your first dose. We recommend when you receive your card, take a picture as a back-up, and add the date to your calendar.

How long do I have to wait between receiving the flu vaccine (or any other vaccine) and the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Pfizer vaccine series should be given alone with a minimum time of 14 days before or after any other vaccines. If the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is given within 14 days of another vaccine by mistake, doses do not need to be repeated for either vaccine.

If I receive the COVID-19 vaccine but my family has not, should I still wear a mask and practice social distancing to prevent bringing the virus home to my family?

Yes. Within households, use the same precautions you have always practiced to prevent COVID-19—wash your hands, self-isolate and get tested if you are sick, limit your interactions with those outside of your household, and wear a mask when with those outside of your household if social distancing cannot be maintained. **When you are in public, be sure to continue to protect yourself by wearing a face covering, watching your distance, and avoiding crowds.**

Questions about Vaccine Safety and How it Works

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Yes! These vaccines have already been given to tens of thousands of volunteers and have been shown to be safe and very good at stopping them from getting sick with COVID-19.

The safety of COVID-19 vaccines is a top priority. Phase 3 clinical trials involve tens of thousands of volunteers who were divided into two groups to get the vaccine or a placebo shot. They were then watched very closely for side effects and illness from COVID-19. Both the Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines demonstrated safety in their Phase 3 clinical trials, with no serious adverse events reported among the tens of thousands who received the vaccines. The vaccine will also continue to be monitored to make sure that any rare problems are found as soon as possible and evaluated to see if they were caused by the vaccine. **There have been two individuals vaccinated with Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in the UK who had history of severe allergic reactions to a vaccine in the past and had severe allergic reactions after receiving the Pfizer vaccine. It is advised that people with severe allergic reactions to injected or infused medications or vaccines be observed for a minimum of 30 minutes after receiving the Pfizer vaccine.**

Will the COVID-19 vaccine infect me with the virus?

No. None of the vaccines currently being developed in the United States contain the virus, so there is no possibility of the vaccine infecting someone with the COVID-19 virus.

Will the vaccine make me sick?

No. The Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines do not contain the virus and cannot cause infection or COVID-19. Some people who receive the vaccine will develop arm soreness or redness, fever, headache, chills, and fatigue. These symptoms typically go away after a day or two.

How does the Pfizer vaccine work?

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine works by giving your body the recipe to make the protein that is on the outside of the coronavirus. When your body sees that protein, it will make protective antibodies to it. Later, if the body sees the real virus, it will remember seeing that protein and destroy the virus before it has a chance to make you sick.

After receiving the vaccine, when will I be immune from COVID-19?

We have learned from clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people who took the vaccine that it is 95% effective at preventing illness from COVID-19 after 7 days from the second dose of vaccine.

The Pfizer vaccine also gave limited protection after the first dose, but you must get both doses to have the best protection against the virus. It will still be important to continue to follow public health recommendations to wear a facial covering, wash hands, and physically distance after receiving the vaccines.

When will a COVID-19 vaccine be available?

The availability of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines depends upon the outcomes of phase 3 clinical trials that are currently happening. [The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine received its EUA approval from the FDA on 12/11/2020 and Tennessee has received its first shipment.](#) TDH is working to ensure that [the vaccine is](#) allocated and distributed to priority populations.

If I get sick with COVID-19 after the first dose of the vaccine but before getting the second dose of the vaccine, what do I do about the second dose?

We expect to learn more about the answer to this question from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), but for now you should plan to receive the second dose after you recover from your COVID-19 illness and after the waiting period for the second dose is over (21 days for the Pfizer vaccine, 28 days for the Moderna vaccine).

Questions about Vaccine Phases

How do I know which "Phase" I am in so I know when I can get the vaccine?

Supply of COVID-19 vaccine in the US is limited right now. The TN Department of Health, with the TN State Government and the TN COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Group, has developed a vaccination plan with "Phases" to help distribute the vaccine as fairly as possible. You can read TN's plan and find more information about COVID-19 vaccines [here](#).

The “Phases” may change, but for now the first Phase 1a1 includes frontline hospital healthcare workers and staff with direct patient exposure or exposure to infectious materials, home care staff, staff of COVID-19 mass-testing events, those providing healthcare services in schools, colleges and universities, first responders with direct public exposure, and staff and residents of long term care and other congregate care facilities.

The next Phase 1a2 includes all other outpatient healthcare workers with direct patient exposure including outpatient health providers, outpatient primary care providers and staff, outpatient specialty providers and staff, pharmacists and staff, patient transport, outpatient therapists, urgent care providers and staff, environmental services with direct patient contact or contact to infectious materials, staff of dental clinics, and behavioral health providers. Additional Phases (1b, 2, 3, and 4) are still subject to change at this time. [The different “Phases” are written in the State’s COVID-19 vaccine plan, which is found here.](#)

I am not in Phase 1a1. How do I get on the list to receive vaccine?

There is **no list** maintained by the TN Department of Health for vaccine distribution. Vaccine will be distributed in “Phases” according to the [TN Vaccination Plan](#). When the time for your phase arrives, more information will be available.

Who decides the Phases and how the vaccine is distributed?

The TN Department of Health, in partnership with the State Government and the TN COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Stakeholder Group, has developed a vaccination plan based upon the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine’s Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine and the CDC’s Playbook for Jurisdictions. You can read Tennessee’s Vaccination Plan and find more information about COVID-19 vaccines [here](#).

Why am I not in a higher priority phase and eligible to receive vaccine sooner?

Tennessee’s COVID-19 Vaccination Plan is based upon the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine’s Framework for the Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine, the CDC’s Playbook for Jurisdictions, and has been vetted with a diverse stakeholder group of more than 30 partners statewide who represent the interests of millions of Tennesseans.

While vaccine supplies are limited, the plan focuses on providing vaccines to those at highest risk of becoming infected with the virus and suffering from life-threatening disease. We will work as quickly as possible to provide vaccines to individuals according to the phased approach set out in the State’s plan, which is posted [here](#). As vaccine supplies

become increasingly available, we look forward to accelerating through our priority Phases, to cover the maximum number of Tennesseans in the shortest time possible.

Questions about Where / How to Get the Vaccine

How do I get the vaccine if I am in Phase 1a1?

Most people in Phase 1a1 will receive vaccine through their employer or through events planned by their local or regional department of health. Please look for communications from them or ask about details from your employer about vaccination events. Long term care facilities will be vaccinated through the federal partnership with Walgreens and CVS, through agreements with local pharmacies, or through vaccination strike teams deployed across the state.

I am an employee that works or volunteers in a hospital and I have direct patient exposure or contact with potentially infectious materials. Where do I get the vaccine?

Talk with your employer/supervisor at the hospital.

I provide home healthcare services and have direct contact with patients. Where do I get the vaccine?

Talk with your home health agency supervisor.

If you're a supervisor/director of a home health agency seeking to organize a vaccination event for your staff, please contact your local or regional health department to learn of their plan for vaccination of Phase 1a1.

I am a first responder with direct public exposure/interaction with the public. Where do I get the vaccine?

Your local or regional health department or local emergency management agency will be reaching out to your employer to let them know when COVID-19 vaccine will be available to you. First responders will receive vaccine through their local or regional department of health.

I am an employer of healthcare workers, but we are not connected to any specific hospital. How do I get the vaccine to my employees?

Phase 1a1 groups not associated with a hospital will receive vaccine through events planned by their local or regional department of health. Please watch for communications from them about upcoming vaccination events.

Questions about Pregnant and Breastfeeding Populations

Should I receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine if I fall into the Phase 1a1 population and I am pregnant?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), pregnant people are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 compared to non-pregnant people based on [what we know now](#). Additionally, pregnant people with COVID-19 might be at increased risk for other adverse outcomes, such as preterm birth.

Currently there are no studies on safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant women to inform vaccine recommendations. ACIP has stated that pregnant and lactating women **may** receive the Pfizer vaccine.

Should I receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine if I am planning to get pregnant?

There is no recommendation for pregnancy testing before getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Those who are trying to become pregnant do not need to avoid pregnancy after a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination.

Is there any reason to choose one vaccine over another if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

At this time, we only know specifics around the Pfizer vaccine, although it is likely that some vaccines will have advantages over others in specific populations. ACIP has advised that pregnant and lactating women **may** receive the Pfizer vaccine.

Should I receive the COVID-19 vaccine if I am breastfeeding?

There are no data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in breastfeeding people or the effects of mRNA vaccines (like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine) on breastfed infants. mRNA vaccines are not thought to be a risk to the breastfeeding infant. A lactating person who is part of a group recommended to receive a COVID-19 vaccine (e.g., healthcare personnel) may choose to be vaccinated.

Who will be eligible to get the vaccine?

Phase 3 clinical trials are ongoing and will determine which vaccines will be appropriate for public use. As of December 2020, only one vaccine in Phase 3 clinical trials has enrolled children and none of the trials currently involve women who are pregnant. Other restrictions may be identified based on data resulting from the Phase 3 trials.

Questions about Children

I have heard the vaccine is not recommended for children under the age of 16. Will children under the age of 16 have the option to be vaccinated?

To date the FDA has issued emergency use authorization for only the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in individuals 16 years of age and older. There are other COVID-19 vaccines in development and pending authorization. Tennessee's Vaccination Plan is subject to change based on availability of COVID-19 vaccines and recommendations for their use.

Monitoring Side Effects after Vaccine

I heard there is a monitoring program for COVID-19 vaccines? How can I participate in this program?

It's called V-SAFE, and it's a smart-phone based monitoring program. It uses text messaging and web surveys to check-in with vaccine recipients after vaccination. Participants would report side effects and health impact events after the COVID-19 vaccination. Depending on your answer, someone from CDC may call to check on you and gather more information. V-safe will also remind you when it's time to receive your second dose if one is needed. Before receiving the vaccine, you will receive an information sheet from your healthcare provider with v-safe information and a link to register.