

COVID-19 Vaccine Patient Information

In mid-December, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use in adults (Pfizer-BioNTech for aged 16 years and older, Moderna for aged 18 years and older).

How does the vaccine work?

Both vaccines are mRNA vaccines, which means that our body is being given instructions (mRNA) on how to make the harmless spike protein that is found on the COVID-19 virus. This allows our body to make antibodies to fight the virus without contracting it. This impressive technology is critically important, as it is a safe and effective way to build immunity towards the disease.

Is there a chance I will get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No. The vaccine is not a live virus and cannot infect you with COVID-19.

Can it change my DNA?

No. The vaccine is an mRNA vaccine, which does not get incorporated into your DNA. Instead, it tells your cells how to build the protein that is found on the surface of the COVID virus, so that the body's natural immune system can build antibodies against that protein. That is how your body naturally builds immunity.

Is the vaccine safe?

Although the timeline for this vaccine development was accelerated, the COVID-19 vaccine is being held to the same safety standards as all vaccines. The vaccine development process is typically slowed down by a shortage of funding and participants; since the COVID vaccines were well-funded with many eager participants, the timeline was significantly reduced.

Is the vaccine effective?

Both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines have been proven to be about 95% effective at preventing the transmission of COVID-19. These vaccines were tested in diverse adult populations.

It is currently unknown how long protection after receiving the vaccine might last.

Can I get the vaccine if I have pre-existing health conditions?

Yes. Study trials found the vaccine to be as safe and effective in individuals with pre-existing medical conditions as it is in otherwise healthy individuals. Currently the only contra-indication to getting the vaccine is a history of severe allergic reaction to an mRNA COVID vaccine or an allergic reaction to polysorbate. Other food and medication allergies are not a contra-indication to the vaccine. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns about a specific medical condition.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

The most common side effects are pain at the site of injection, headache, fever, chills, and muscle and joint pain. These side effects were especially noticed in the Moderna vaccine following the second injection, as your body is revving up its immune response. Many well-studied vaccines that are commonly given have similar side effects. Serious allergic reactions are rare but if you feel that you are having a severe allergic reaction please call 911 immediately.

What else do I need to know?

The COVID-19 vaccine is a 2-shot series, with the second shot given at least 21 days (for Pfizer-BioNTech) or 28 days (for Moderna) after the first. The vaccine is administered intramuscularly into the deltoid, similar to the influenza vaccine. Finally, the vaccine will continue to be studied to gather long-term data on the safety and efficacy in the coming months and beyond. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines.

Distribution:
Per CDC rec

Phase	Groups recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccine	No. (millions)		
		Total persons in each group*	Unique persons in each group†	Unique persons in each phase
1a	Health care personnel	21	21	24
	Long-term care facility residents	3	3	
1b	Frontline essential workers [§]	30	30	49
	Persons aged ≥75 years	21	19	
1c	Persons aged 65–74 years	32	28	129
	Persons aged 16–64 years¶ with high-risk medical conditions	110	81	
	Essential workers [§] not recommended for vaccination in Phase 1b	57	20	
2	All persons aged ≥16 years¶ not previously recommended for vaccination	All remaining	All remaining	All remaining

Currently Connecticut is in Phase 1a:

- Healthcare personal: All paid and unpaid personal serving in healthcare settings who have potential for direct or indirect to patients of infectious materials
- Long term care facilities: Adults who reside in facilities that provide a range of services, including medical and personal care, to persons unable to live independently
- First responders at risk of exposure to COVID-19 through their response to medical emergencies such as EMTs, Police, and Fire.

Starting the week of 1/10/2021 Phase 1b scheduling is beginning:

- The first group to schedule in this phase are people over the age of 75.
- The state is currently setting up appointment only for individuals over 75, and will begin vaccination the week of 1/18/2021

Sources:

- CT.gov - Connecticut's Official State Website. 2021. *COVID-19 Vaccine In Connecticut: Main Portal*. [online] Available at: <<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Vaccinations>> [Accessed 29 December 2020].
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2021. *COVID-19 And Your Health*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/expect/after.html>> [Accessed 29 December 2020].
- The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Updated Interim Recommendation for Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine - United States, December 2020. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm695152e2.htm?s_cid=mm695152e2_w#T1_down. Published December 31, 2020. Accessed January 2, 2021.
- Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>. Published January 6, 2021. Accessed January 14, 2021.