

Virginia Premier COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

Updated December 21, 2020

The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approved an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19 in individuals 16 years of age and older.

They also approved an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) of the Moderna Inc. COVID-19 Vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19 in individuals 18 years and older.

1. How safe are these vaccines?

- Clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines must first show they are safe and effective before any vaccine can be authorized or approved for use. The known and potential benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine must outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine for use under what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).
- The safety of COVID-19 vaccines is being carefully evaluated by the FDA and external data monitoring committees. A COVID-19 vaccine will receive an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) **only** if the vaccine has **proven** to be safe and effective. Safety is a top priority and consideration. [Read more about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines from the CDC.](#)
- You will not get COVID-19 from the vaccine. None of the vaccines currently in development use the live virus that caused COVID-19. Using new vaccine technology (mRNA), the COVID-19 vaccine will teach our own immune system to recognize and fight off the virus that causes COVID-19, protecting ourselves from sickness.
- Both Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna report their vaccines are roughly 95% effective in preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infection. These are highly effective vaccines.
- Both the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines will be administered in two required doses. An initial dose will be given and then a subsequent vaccine will be administered 21 to 28 days later depending on the vaccine manufacturer. It is very important that you get both vaccines to ensure maximum protection against the virus.

2. Who qualifies for the COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 1?

- Due to the limited supply, the vaccine will be distributed in phases to high-priority groups first.
- The Virginia Department of Health is following the Center for Disease Control's recommendations for distribution of these vaccines.
- Phase I will include vaccine distribution to high-risk healthcare personnel with the highest risk of COVID-19 exposure (emergency department staff, COVID-19 patient units, EMS transport, etc.), and staff and residents of long-term care facilities (nursing homes).

3. Who qualifies for the COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 2?

- Phase 2 is slated to include other workers in essential industries, people with medical issues that put them at high-risk for COVID-19, and people 65 years and older.
4. **There is currently a limited supply of the COVID-19 vaccine. Will the supply of the vaccine increase so everyone has access to it?**
 - The goal is for everyone to easily have access to the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as larger quantities of the vaccine are available.
 5. **What are the benefits of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?**
 - Vaccines have reduced or eliminated many deadly diseases throughout our history and have saved millions of lives.
 - Receiving an approved COVID-19 vaccine will lessen your risk of contracting the virus.
 6. **What are the side-effects of receiving a vaccine?**
 - There were no serious side effects reported by the tens of thousands of people who received the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in clinical trials.
 - There is a remote chance Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction, which would likely occur within an hour of getting the vaccine. Medical professionals administering the vaccines have been trained to handle these situations immediately.
 - Mild symptoms that have been reported include muscle pain at the injection site, low-grade fever, and/or headache over the first few days after vaccination.
 - Experiencing fatigue, fever, headache, and chills are a normal immune response and indicate the vaccine is working.
 - Most side effects are expected to occur within the first six weeks of a vaccine.
 7. **Who should not get the COVID-19 vaccine?**
 - The FDA recommends that if you are prone to severe allergic reactions, or are allergic to the ingredients of this vaccine, you should not get this shot.
 - Youth under the age of 16 should not receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Youth under the age of 18 should not get the Moderna vaccine.
 8. **What are the ingredients of the COVID-19 vaccine?**
 - The Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine includes the following ingredients: mRNA, lipids ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate), 2-[(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide, 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine, and cholesterol), potassium chloride, monobasic potassium phosphate, sodium chloride, dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate, and sucrose

9. What should Pregnant women or women who are breastfeeding do regarding getting the vaccine?

- If you are pregnant/breastfeeding, we encourage you to talk with your OBGYN to decide what your risk factors are, if any, and if the vaccine is right for you.

- At this time, out of an abundance of caution, Sentara Employee Health COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics will not be offering the COVID-19 vaccine to pregnant women or those with a history of severe allergic reactions. We will continually monitor information regarding vaccine efficacy and safety in these population groups and will share more updates with you as we receive them.

- Those who are breastfeeding can receive the vaccine.

10. Is there anything that you should tell the vaccination provider before getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Tell the vaccination provider the following:
- Current and historic medical conditions and allergies If you have a fever
- Any bleeding disorders or if are you on a blood thinner, any immunocompromised diagnosis or are on a medicine that affects your immune system ,if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are you breast-feeding

11. If I have already had COVID-19, do I need to get the vaccine?

Yes. Because re-infection is possible, the CDC and FDA believe people who were sick with COVID-19 may still benefit from the vaccine.

12. If I receive the vaccine, can I still get infected with COVID-19?

- It is still possible to get infected with COVID-19 after receiving the vaccine.
- It is likely your symptoms will be less severe and for a shorter period of time because your immune system already has some protection against the virus. It is still unknown if you can transmit the COVID-19 virus to others after receiving the vaccine. Therefore, you must still follow all safety guidelines after vaccination and continue to wear a mask.

If I get the COVID-19 vaccine, do I still have to wear a mask?

- Yes. If you receive a COVID-19, you will still need to obey all the COVID-19 safety precautions and wear all appropriate PPE. This includes wearing a mask, eye protection, gowns, social distancing, and washing your hands often.
- The COVID-19 vaccine will be an additional tool for us to use to fight against the pandemic. To beat the pandemic, we must continue to use all the tools we have available to us, including masking & wearing eye protection, social distancing, and washing our hands often.