



Frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine in Oregon

(Updated 2-5-2021)

General

Q1. Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccination?

A1. Vaccination is a safe, effective and reliable way to prevent getting sick from COVID-19. It's the best tool we have to help us end the COVID-19 pandemic in Oregon. By getting vaccinated, wearing masks, washing our hands, staying physically distant and avoiding large indoor gatherings we can help stop the spread. If enough of us get vaccinated, we can achieve community immunity and the virus will not spread quickly.

Q2. How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

A2. Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are messenger RNA, or mRNA, vaccines. mRNA vaccines give our cells instructions for how to make a harmless protein that is unique to the virus. Our bodies recognize that the protein should not be there and build T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes that will remember how to fight the virus that causes COVID-19 if we are infected in the future. The CDC has additional information on [how mRNA vaccines work](#).

Q3. Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

A3. Thanks to advances in medicine, scientists were able to create and test a vaccine quickly. The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) requires rigorous safety testing before it will approve any vaccine. Tens of thousands of people — including Oregonians — from many backgrounds, ages and communities of color, participated in vaccine testing.

What does Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) mean? In times of a public health emergency, like a pandemic, the FDA allows the use of certain life-saving drugs and treatments through Emergency Use Authorization. The COVID-19 vaccine was tested in tens of thousands of study participants, which generated enough data to convince the FDA that the vaccine is safe and effective, and the manufacturer producing the vaccine meets all safety standards.

Q4. How soon after the second dose will the vaccine become effective?

A4. Clinical trials measured the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines. Each vaccine requires two doses.

- The Moderna vaccine is 94% effective two weeks after a person receives the second shot. The Pfizer vaccine is 95% effective one week after the second shot.

Q5. Will there be enough COVID-19 vaccine for everyone?

A5. The vaccine may be scarce at first, so distribution will be prioritized. But as COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing ramps up, eventually there will be enough vaccine for everyone. This timing depends upon how many vaccines are approved and the total supply of vaccine available through manufacturers. We hope by fall 2021, everyone who wants a COVID-19 vaccination can get one.

Q6. How will Oregon ensure equitable vaccine distribution?

A6. OHA is committed to an equitable distribution. OHA assembled a 27 person COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee. VAC members were selected from a group of nearly 700 people for their professional background, lived experiences or expertise serving individuals that have been systemically impacted by COVID-19. The VAC was convened with the specific intent of centering equity in all vaccine sequencing decisions and helping OHA reach its strategic goal to eliminate health inequities by 2030. On January 28, 2021, the VAC delivered its recommendations for vaccine sequencing along with a statement of intention. Briefly, the VAC acknowledges structural racism and pressure from systems that are not ready to center this truth about the ways structural racism impacts the health of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. OHA is working with the Governor's office to operationalize the COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee's (VAC) recommendations. Final sequencing decisions will be made available on covidvaccine.oregon.gov.

Q7. Will OHA force me to get a COVID-19 vaccination?

A7. OHA does not plan to require the COVID-19 vaccination, but we do strongly recommend vaccination for the safety and health of the entire community.

Q8. I've already had COVID-19 and recovered. Do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine when it's available?

A8. Yes. Even if you've been sick with COVID, the vaccine will help protect you. And getting vaccinated is one of the best ways to protect your family and your community too. Wait until the end of your isolation period after infection with COVID-19 to get your vaccine (1st or 2nd dose). For most kinds of the vaccine, you will need to get two shots. You get the second shot 3 or 4 weeks after you get the first one. Even if you've had COVID, at this time we recommend you still get both shots of the vaccine for full effectiveness.

Q9. Will I need to keep wearing a mask and being physically distant after I get the COVID-19 vaccination?

A9. You will still need to wear a mask and physically distance after getting the vaccine for now. Things can't go back to normal until enough people are vaccinated. However, we don't know yet if a person who got both shots can still spread COVID-19. We don't want you to spread it to people who haven't yet been vaccinated. It is important to keep wearing a mask, stay 6 feet from others, wash your hands, and not spend time with people you don't live with.

Eligibility:

Q1. How do I find out if I am eligible to get vaccinated?

A1. [Here is a list](#) of who can get vaccinated currently. Starting Feb.8, you can also go to covidvaccine.oregon.gov and use the **NEW Get Vaccinated Oregon tool**. It is designed to help you understand if you are eligible. You will want to register to get updates on vaccination opportunities. If you need help getting registered, ask someone to help or reach out to 211:

- Text ORCOVID to 898211
- Email ORCOVID@211info.org
- Call 211 or 1-866-698-6155

Q2. Who will be next in line for vaccine after those in Phase 1a, educators, adults in custody and older adults?

A2. OHA assembled a 27 person COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee (VAC), selected from around 700 applicants, based on their professional background, lived experiences or expertise serving individuals that have been systemically impacted by COVID-19. The VAC was convened with the specific intent of centering equity in all vaccine sequencing decisions and helping OHA reach its strategic goal to eliminate health inequities by 2030. On January 28, 2021, the VAC delivered its recommendations for vaccine sequencing following 0-12 educators and staff and adults 65 and older and before the general public.

The VAC has recommended to OHA that the next phase include:

- Adults 16-64 with underlying health conditions
- Front-line workers
- Adults and youth in custody 16 years and older (Adults in custody are being included as part of Phase 1a after a federal court ruling on February 2, 2021)
- People living in low income and congregate senior housing

The VAC is recommending people who live in multi-generational households to be next in line after these groups, followed by the general population.

OHA is working with the Governor's office to operationalize the VAC's recommendations which will include more specifically defining front-line workers.

Q3. I am an education worker. When will I get vaccinated?

A3. If you work in a childcare or K-12 school setting, you are eligible for a vaccine starting Jan. 25, 2021. If you work in a public or private K-12 school setting, your school district will contact you about scheduling a vaccination. If you are a childcare worker, your employer will connect you with information about scheduling a vaccine. If you are an employer of childcare workers, or an in home-provider, your county or other local vaccine partner will reach out to you to provide you with information to schedule a vaccine for yourself and for your employees.

Q4. When will older adults be eligible to get vaccinated?

A4. State COVID-19 vaccine partners can begin vaccinating Oregonians age 80 and older on Feb. 8. Information about eligibility for older adults between the ages of 65-80 can be [found here](#). It is important to note that there will not be enough vaccine supply to quickly vaccinate all older Oregonians. Most older adults will not be able to get appointments for a vaccine for the next few weeks. You've waited a long time. It's hard to wait but we ask that you please have patience. We are dependent on the federal vaccine supply.

Q5. If one spouse or partner qualifies for a vaccine (i.e., education workers, older adults, health care provider) would the other spouse who does not fit qualification criteria also get the vaccine?

A5. No. There will be very limited quantities of the vaccines in the early days of distribution, so only those who are [part of a phase that is eligible](#) will be able to receive the vaccines.

Q6. My permanent residence is in another state, but I'm staying in Oregon (student, multiple homes, staying with family, etc.). When it's my turn, can I get my vaccine in Oregon?

A6. If you are currently residing in Oregon and meet Oregon's eligibility criteria you may get your vaccine in Oregon.

Q7. Can people who work in Oregon but live in a bordering state get vaccinated in Oregon?

A7. If you live in a bordering state you are being included in that state's population for purposes of vaccine allocation and you should get your vaccine from the state where you live, not the state where you work. However, if you are eligible for vaccination in Oregon because of your job – for example you are a health care worker at a hospital in Oregon or a teacher at an Oregon K-12 school, you can and should get vaccinated through your employer or at a mass vaccination or community clinic in Oregon.

Q8. Do I need to be vaccinated in the same county I live in? Or work in?

A8. If you are eligible to receive a vaccination, you are encouraged to get vaccinated in the county you live in but you can get vaccinated in any county in Oregon.

Getting your vaccine:

Q1. Where can I get vaccinated?

A1. Vaccines are scarce but there will eventually be enough for everyone who wants one. Right now, places that are giving vaccines—when they have them—include local public health authorities or their partners, hospitals and vaccination events. As the vaccine supply increases, you may be able to get vaccinated at other places. For now, due to the limited supply, your primary care provider (your doctor's office) likely won't get vaccines. You may also hear about vaccination events on the news. These events will have a way for you to make an appointment to get your shot.

Q2. What identification (ID) do I need to bring with me to prove my eligibility?

A2. OHA does not require proof that someone vaccinated is eligible and doesn't plan to request verification from vaccinating providers. Vaccine providers themselves may require an individual to declare, through a verbal declaration or in some other way, they are in an eligible group before they receive a vaccine. People will receive proof they've been vaccinated. Do not lose the card you are given.

Q3. Do I need to provide a social security number to schedule a vaccine appointment?

A3. No. If you are asked for a social security number during the appointment scheduling process, you do not need to provide one and can leave that question blank.

Q3. How much will it cost? Do I need to have insurance to get a vaccine?

A3. COVID vaccines will be free for you. You do not need health insurance. If you have health insurance, vaccine providers may charge your insurance company an administration fee for giving you the vaccine. This means that you might be asked for your insurance information when you get the COVID vaccine. Vaccine providers cannot charge *you* for giving you a vaccine, but it is important that you bring your insurance information if you have health insurance.

Q4. I need help getting to a vaccine clinic. Can I be provided transportation to get vaccinated? How do I arrange for that?

A4. If you are an Oregon Health Plan member and need a ride to get a vaccine, rides are free. Find the [OHP ride services](#) in your area. You can also call your [CCO plan](#).

Q5. Will I have to wait in line?

A5. Many vaccination sites and events will ask you to pre-register so that they can safely manage the flow of patients. Large vaccine sites are also working to make sure their sites are accessible for older adults and people with disabilities, particularly those who have mobility issues. But you also may have to wait. We encourage you to plan ahead and ask vaccine site administrators for accommodations if you need them.

Q6. What if I get exposed to COVID-19 after my first dose?

A6. If you are exposed to COVID, you should follow the public health guidelines and stay home for 14 days even if you've gotten your first shot.

This information will be available on covidvaccine.oregon.gov once the sequencing decisions are finalized.

Q7. How long will I need to be observed for after I am vaccinated?

A7. You will be observed for 15-30 minutes. This means you need to wait where you got your shot so the vaccine provider can watch you to make sure you're feeling okay.

Q8. When should I get the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine? How will I remember?

A8. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine require two doses to promote a full immune response. The second dose of the Pfizer vaccine should be administered 21 days after the first dose, and the Moderna vaccine should be administered 28 days after the first dose. Individuals can enroll [VaxText](#), a CDC program that will send the patient a text when their next dose is due. Some vaccine providers may also send you a reminder.

Q9. What if I have a bad reaction to my COVID-19 vaccination?

A9. CDC and FDA encourage the public to report possible side effects (called adverse events) to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#). This national system collects these data to look for adverse events that are unexpected, appear to happen more often than expected or have unusual patterns of occurrence. Learn about the [difference between a vaccine side effect and an adverse event](#). Reports to VAERS help CDC monitor the safety of vaccines. Safety is a top priority.

Q10. Who should I call if I have side effects: the vaccination site or my primary care provider?

A10. If you have concerns about any side effects after you leave the vaccination site, you should contact your primary care provider. If it's an emergency, you can go to an urgent care or emergency facility. You can also report your side effects to the CDC using the app [vsafe.cdc.gov](#).

Q11. I already received my first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Where should I get the second dose?

A11. You should receive your second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the same location you received the first, unless otherwise directed by the vaccine provider.

Q12. If I get my first dose of the vaccine in Oregon, can I get the second dose in another state? If I get my first dose of the vaccine in another state, can I get the second dose in Oregon?

A12. If you are eligible to be vaccinated under Oregon's current eligibility criteria you can get your second dose in Oregon even if you got your first dose in another state, though we encourage people to finish their vaccination series at the same location. If you are only getting your second dose in Oregon you must provide documentation of having received your first dose that shows which vaccine you were given to the vaccinator and they must document both doses in Oregon's Immunization Information System (ALERT IIS).

Vaccine distribution in Oregon

Q1. Will OHA publish vaccination information on regular basis, in the same manner that you publicly report the daily number of tests, new cases and deaths from COVID-19?

A1. Yes, OHA is reporting vaccine and vaccination data on the COVID-19 vaccine website. You can get the facts about COVID-19 vaccines and track Oregon's progress at <https://covidvaccine.oregon.gov>.

Q2. Will vaccines need special storage?

A2. Many vaccines, like Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine, require a standard cold chain involving either basic refrigeration or freezing. The Pfizer vaccine requires a special ultra-cold chain using a specialized freezer that keeps vaccine at temperatures of -60 ° to -80 ° Celsius. Oregon has a limited number of these freezers, though some hospitals and universities have them. The vaccine's packaging can be filled with dry ice pellets, which may allow vaccine to be stored up to 30 days without the use of a specialized sub-zero freezer.

Q3. Are you buying more ultra-cold storage freezers?

A3. In early January, OHA received 15 small, portable ultra-low temperature storage units to increase storage of the Pfizer vaccine in other non-hospital settings or in communities that don't have the resources or need to buy their own unit. All units have been distributed and currently OHA is not planning to purchase more. We are looking at the total picture of vaccine distribution, including vaccines that do not require ultra-cold storage. We expect federal allocations of different vaccines to continue to change and are working with our partners to maintain flexibility in our distribution systems so that we ensure access to the COVID-19 vaccine throughout Oregon regardless of available products.

Details about the vaccine:

Q1. I'm pregnant. Can I get a COVID-19 vaccination?

A1. CDC doesn't have any COVID-19 safety data on pregnant women, though animal and human studies are ongoing, and more are planned to begin in Jan. 2021. mRNA vaccines are not "live virus" vaccines. If a woman is part of a group (i.e., health care worker) recommended to get a COVID-19 vaccine and is pregnant, she may choose to get the vaccine in consultation with her medical provider's help in making an informed decision. Things to consider:

- Level of COVID-19 in the community and the risk of transmission
- The personal risk of acquiring COVID-19 (occupation or other activities)
- The risk of COVID-19 to her or her fetus
- The efficacy of the vaccine
- The side effects of the vaccine
- The lack of data about the vaccine during pregnancy
- Women who take the vaccine and have fever as a side effect should take acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Routine testing for pregnancy before vaccination is not recommended

Q2. Are the vaccines interchangeable?

A2. Though Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are made the same way, people must get the same second dose from the same manufacturer of the first. Both are equally effective and stop the spread of virus in the same way, so the people should take whichever vaccine is available to them.

Q3. Is the COVID-19 vaccine a live virus?

A3. The mRNA vaccines are not a live virus.

Q4. Will the Pfizer vaccine remain at freezing temperatures when it is injected? Or will it be warmed up?

A4. The vaccine will be diluted and stored in a refrigerator or at room temperature up to six hours before the vaccination.

Q5. What are the COVID-19 vaccine's side effects?

A5. According to the FDA, the most common side effects found in the COVID-19 vaccine trials included pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle pain and joint pain. After getting the COVID-19 vaccine, you will probably have a sore arm. You might have muscle aches, joint pain, tiredness, headache, chills, or maybe a fever. (Fever is less common.) This often means the vaccine is working to keep your body healthy. These are normal signs that your body is building protection. Sometimes these side effects may stop you

from doing your normal activities for a couple days. Most of these side effects should go away in a few days.

Q6. Can a person receive the COVID-19 vaccine while they are sick?

A6. Those with mild illness may receive the vaccines with no effect on vaccine safety or effectiveness. However, please wait until the end of your isolation period, meaning either 10 days or longer depending on when you recover from your symptoms, before getting vaccines to keep from spreading your illness to health care workers who are administering the vaccine.

Q7. Are both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine the same amount? Is the second dose less or more than the first dose?

A7. Both doses are the same amount for the Pfizer vaccine. The Moderna vaccine also uses two doses that are the same.

Q8. Can I get other shots at the same time as my COVID-19 vaccine?

A8. Just to be safe, the CDC recommends you wait for two weeks after getting other vaccines before getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Once you get your COVID-19 vaccine, you should wait for two weeks before getting other vaccines.

Since many people will not be able to get COVID-19 vaccines right away, now is a perfect time to receive other vaccines that may be due, like a flu shot, tetanus shot or shingles vaccine.

Where can I go for more information?

- Go to covidvaccine.oregon.gov.
- Text ORCOVID to 898211 to get text/SMS updates (English and Spanish only).
- Email ORCOVID@211info.org.

If you can't get your COVID-19 vaccine question answered on covidvaccine.oregon.gov, by text, or by email, call the call center at 211 or 1-866-698-6155. It is open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, including holidays.

- Wait times may be long due to high call volumes. There is an option to get a call back rather than wait on hold.
- English and Spanish are spoken at the call center. Free interpretation is available for all other languages.
- TTY: Dial 711 or call 1-866-698-6155.

Document accessibility: For individuals with disabilities or individuals who speak a language other than English, OHA can provide information in alternate formats such as translations, large print, or braille. Contact the Health Information Center at 1-971-673-2411, 711 TTY or COVID19.LanguageAccess@dhsosha.state.or.us.