

COVID-19 Vaccine

Frequently Asked Questions

1) How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

There are multiple COVID vaccines at various stages of the development, approval and distribution process. The clinical trials for the Pfizer vaccine showed a 95% efficacy rate and 94% with the Moderna vaccine in preventing symptomatic COVID. That means the rate of catching COVID in vaccinated participants was only 5-6% of the rate seen in those who received placebo. There is still a small chance of infection post-vaccination. Masks and social distancing will be with us for some time to come.

Research is still being done to measure the impact on transmission—whether someone vaccinated can pass the infection on to someone else. Virtually all vaccines both protect against getting the disease and reducing transmission, and it is our hope that these vaccines follow that pattern. As with other vaccines, the more people who get immunized, the greater the community-wide protection against the disease.

2) Is the vaccine safe?

While the COVID vaccine is new, the clinical trials and vetting vaccines go through are not. The speed of the vaccine development process may make people wary, but there have been multiple layers of safety and quality assurance. As was the case for other vaccines in the past, oversight and review of the COVID vaccine authorization process by the FDA and CDC was led by panels of independent experts. Washington was also a member of the Western States Pact, which created the Scientific Safety Review Workgroup for another layer of scrutiny and expert review to this process. Learn more at www.snohd.org/covidvaccine.

3) What are the side effects from the vaccine?

Side effects that have been reported with the COVID-19 vaccine include:

- Pain, redness or swelling at the site of injection
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle or joint pain
- Chills
- Nausea
- Swollen lymph nodes

One or more of these side effects are to be expected in up to 1-in-4 people after the first dose and 1-in-2 after the second dose. They generally occur the day after vaccination and are normal signs that the vaccine is working. You can take fever or pain relievers like acetaminophen or ibuprofen if needed or apply a cool compress to the injection site. Contact your healthcare provider if you are concerned or if the symptoms don't go away within two days (48 hours).

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4) What adverse reactions were reported for the vaccine?

There is a remote chance that the vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction. This was not observed during the clinical trials, but has been observed in rare cases since the vaccine has been implemented outside research studies. Those kind of reactions would usually occur within a few minutes to one hour after getting a dose of the vaccine. Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include:

- difficulty breathing
- swelling of your face and throat
- a fast heartbeat
- itching
- hives
- dizziness and weakness.

If you have a severe allergic reaction, and are not still at the vaccine clinic, seek medical attention or call 911 immediately. The CDC has also created V-safe, a platform for people to share information on their side effects and reactions. All vaccine recipients are encouraged to sign up for this system to provide additional information about the vaccine's side effects as vaccination is implemented. Learn more at www.cdc.gov/vsafe.

5) Will the vaccine give me COVID?

No. The vaccine does not contain SARS-CoV-2 and cannot give you COVID-19.

6) How many doses do I need?

There will likely be multiple potential COVID vaccines rolling out within the next year, so be sure to check with your medical provider on the vaccine for specific instructions. The Pfizer vaccine requires two (2) doses, with the second dose given 17-21 days after the first one. The Moderna vaccine also requires two (2) doses, with the second dose given 28 days after the first one. It's important to make sure you get both doses of the same vaccine brand in order for the vaccine to be most effective.

7) Who will get the vaccine first?

Vaccines will be given out in planned phases. The first phase will be for workers in high-risk healthcare settings and high-risk first responders in order to protect our medical and emergency care capabilities. The first phase will also include residents and staff at nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other community-based congregate living settings where most of the individuals receiving care are over 65 years of age.

8) How were the phases decided? Can I get vaccinated sooner?

Snohomish County's framework for the phased approach to COVID-19 vaccination is aligned with the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). It is important that the framework is consistent

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across the state and between counties to ensure that the roll-out of the vaccine is efficient, understandable, and equitable.

While we have received inquiries from organizations, employers or individuals that are interested in being vaccinated earlier in the framework, we do not anticipate adjusting the phases locally in such a way that they would vary from what is adopted by the state Department of Health..

9) How do I know if a message or email offering vaccination options is legitimate?

There are, unfortunately, already scams circulating related to COVID-19 vaccine. Know how to spot vaccine scams. Remember that there are no pre-payments required to “get in line” for vaccination, you cannot pay for early access, vaccines are not available for purchase online, and vaccines must be administered by licensed medical professionals. Most people are expected to be vaccinated by their regular healthcare provider. Turn to your doctor, clinic, or other reliable sources if you are uncertain whether a message or email about COVID vaccine is legitimate. If you receive a vaccination-related communication from someone other than your health care provider, health insurance provider, or employer, you have reason to be suspicious.

You can check back at www.snohd.org/covidvaccine for additional tools to find reliable vaccination options in Snohomish County. These will be added as they become available. You can also reach the Snohomish Health District COVID call center at 425-339-5278 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays.

10) When will I get vaccinated?

For most Snohomish County residents, the vaccine is expected to be administered through the existing healthcare system. Connecting to a primary care provider will help to have a smooth pathway to being vaccinated when your turn comes further down the line. If you are not already connected to primary care, now is a good time to work on finding a primary care provider.

If you do not have a primary care provider, are struggling to access healthcare, or do not have insurance, there are resources available. Find information about insurance at www.hca.wa.gov or www.wahealthplanfinder.org. You can also call 2-1-1 for help connecting with health and human services in the community.

Those eligible for Phase 1a should be contacted by their employer or agency. Check www.snohd.org/covidvaccine for updates.

11) Who should get the vaccine?

The FDA has authorized the Pfizer vaccine for individuals 16 years of age or older and the Moderna vaccine for those 18 years of age or older. Tell your vaccine provider about all of your medical conditions. You should not get the vaccine if you have had a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of the same vaccine or a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient of this vaccine.

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12) If I had COVID, should I still get vaccinated?

Yes, when you are eligible to get the vaccine, it is recommended that you do so. We are still learning about COVID. While reinfection appears to be rare so far, it is possible to get COVID more than once. If you currently have COVID, wait until after your isolation period is done to get vaccinated. Talk with your healthcare provider for additional guidance.

13) Do I get to choose which vaccine I get?

Right now, only the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been authorized for distribution. As we learn more from the clinical trials, there may be a vaccine that is more appropriate for you than another. We encourage you to talk with your healthcare provider to know what is recommended for your circumstances.

14) Once I get the vaccine, can I stop wearing a mask?

The vaccine looks to be very effective, but it's not perfect. Even after you are vaccinated, you will need to avoid gatherings, wear a face covering and keep your distance when around people outside your household. This isn't forever, just for now.

15) How soon can we get back to pre-pandemic activities?

The COVID vaccine is a big step on the path out of this pandemic, but it is not an instant solution. If all goes smoothly, it will likely take 9-12 months to fully vaccinate most of the population. That's another 9-12 months of fighting COVID with the same measures we're relying on now. Wear a mask. Avoid gatherings. Stay home if you're sick. Keep your distance and wash your hands. We can't let our guard down until public health and medical professionals agree it is safe to do so.

16) How does the vaccine work?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are messenger RNA vaccines, also known as mRNA vaccines. These are a new type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases, but they have been known and researched for decades.

To trigger an immune response, many vaccines put a weakened or inactivated germ into our bodies. Not mRNA vaccines. Instead, they teach our cells how to make a protein from the virus—or even just a piece of that protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies later.

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17) What is in the vaccine??

You may see some rumors about ingredients listed online or in social media. These are generally myths. The [ingredients in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines](#) are pretty typical for a vaccine. They contain the active ingredient of mRNA along with other ingredients like fat, salts, and sugars that protect the active ingredient, help them work better in the body, and protect the vaccine during freezing. See [this Q&A webpage from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia](#) for more information about ingredients.