



## COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

*This information is based on currently available evidence, resources, information, emergency use authorization and expert opinion and is subject to change. As additional evidence regarding the use of COVID-19 vaccine for individuals emerges, it will be necessary to modify this document.*

### **When will COVID-19 vaccine arrive in Georgia?**

The first doses of COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Georgia in mid-December. Initial supply is limited and individuals receiving the vaccine will be prioritized based on risk of exposure and transmission. It will take until late spring of 2021 for the vaccine to be widely available to the general public.

### **Who should be vaccinated against COVID-19 infection?**

The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as large enough quantities are available. Once vaccine is widely available, the plan is to have several thousand vaccination providers offering COVID-19 vaccines in doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, federally qualified health centers and county health departments.

### **Who will get vaccinated first?**

The Georgia Department of Public Health is following the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for prioritizing vaccination. Based on the risk of infection and transmission of COVID-19, and ethical concerns, ACIP has recommended that healthcare workers and residents of long-term care facilities be the highest priority groups to receive vaccine.

### **Where will the first doses of COVID-19 vaccine be given?**

Vaccine will be given through closed points of dispensing or PODs. These sites include public health clinics, hospitals, long-term care facilities and pharmacies, and are only accessible to individuals in defined priority groups.

### **When will vaccine be available for the public?**

At this time, there are not enough doses of COVID-19 vaccine available to vaccinate everyone, therefore the CDC has established phases/groups for individuals to receive vaccine. Currently, the goal is to vaccinate healthcare workers and those who live in long-term care facilities. The number of COVID-19 vaccines will increase over time, and all adults should be able to get vaccinated later in 2021. However, a COVID-19 vaccine may not be available for young children until more studies are completed.

### **When the vaccine becomes available to the public where can I go to receive it?**

The vaccine will be available throughout Georgia. Once widely available to the general public you will be able to receive it from any location/provider that is enrolled as a COVID-19 vaccine provider – this includes private healthcare providers, health departments, pharmacies and hospitals.

## **Can I get a religious/philosophical exemption (waiver)?**

The Georgia Department of Public Health strongly encourages eligible individuals to receive vaccination. However, currently, Georgia does not mandate COVID-19 vaccine for any group of individuals, therefore we do not provide forms for religious/philosophical exemptions. Please consult with your employer regarding their COVID-19 vaccination and exemption policies.

## **How do I know what group/phase I am in to receive the vaccine?**

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will determine who will be included in the next group/phase to receive vaccine. Georgia will follow ACIP's recommendations and update the residents of Georgia as more vaccine becomes available and more groups are recommended to receive it.

## **What is ACIP?**

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is a panel of medical and public health experts and medical ethicists who develop recommendations on the use of vaccines in the United States. The recommendations provide public health guidance for safe use of vaccines and related biological products.

## **What COVID-19 vaccines are expected to be available first?**

On Dec. 11, 2020, Pfizer was given Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for its COVID-19 vaccine. Moderna was granted a similar EUA for its COVID-19 vaccine Dec. 18, 2020.

There are large clinical trials currently in progress or being planned for other COVID-19 vaccines in the United States.

## **What is an EUA?**

In certain public health emergencies, FDA may issue an Emergency Use Authorization or EUA which allows a drug or vaccine to be used when there are no sufficient treatments or vaccines available. The FDA may grant an EUA once studies have demonstrated the safety and effectiveness of a vaccine but before the manufacturer has submitted a license application and/or before the FDA has completed its formal review of the license application.

## **Is the vaccine safe?**

Safety is a key concern among health officials and experts. Before the FDA approves a vaccine, the manufacturer must do rigorous research and testing to ensure the vaccine's safety and effectiveness. The FDA independently reviews and verifies the information from these tests. It then decides whether the vaccine can be licensed and given to the public.

No major safety concerns were uncovered in the FDA's review of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine.

For each vaccine authorized by the FDA, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) carefully reviews all available data about the vaccine from clinical trials and other studies, and makes recommendations for vaccine use in the general public. Recommendations include groups that should and should not receive the vaccine, as well as the timing, volume, number, and spacing of doses in a vaccine series.

The FDA and CDC continue to closely monitor vaccine safety after the public begins using the vaccine. Both agencies have longstanding and new safety systems in place for heightened monitoring of all COVID-19 vaccines.

### **What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The most common known side-effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are short-term injection site pain, fever, chills, headaches, muscle aches and joint pain. These symptoms are temporary and are in line with side effects some people experience from some other vaccines, including the flu shot and the vaccine to prevent shingles.

Vaccines work to fight disease by producing an immune response within the body, and sometimes that means flu-like symptoms occur as your body responds to the vaccine. It is normal and expected.

### **Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?**

No. The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain the live virus that causes COVID-19 and cannot cause COVID-19.

### **Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for children? What about pregnant women?**

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for use in individuals 16 and older. Research is continuing and clinical trials will begin enrollment in the near future to study the vaccine's safety and effectiveness in children.

Research is ongoing, but pregnancy-specific data do not yet exist. Based on how the COVID-19 vaccine works, medical experts do not believe the vaccine poses a risk for pregnant women and their babies. Pregnant women should discuss their options with their healthcare provider.

### **Can people with an egg allergy receive the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccines contain egg.

### **How many doses of vaccine will I need?**

You need 2 doses of the currently available COVID-19 vaccine. A second shot 3 weeks after your first shot is needed to get the most protection the vaccine has to offer against this serious disease.

### **What if I only get one dose of the vaccine?**

It is recommended that individuals receive both doses of the vaccine to ensure full protection.

### **How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The Pfizer vaccine showed a 95% efficacy rate 7 days after the second dose. The vaccine was 94% effective in adults >65 years old. The Moderna vaccine showed a 94% efficacy rate 14% days after the second dose. These results were consistent across gender, age and ethnicity.

### **If I had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to be vaccinated?**

It is recommended individuals who have had and recovered from COVID-19 also should be vaccinated.

## **Do I still need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others once I receive 2 doses of vaccine?**

It's important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic as we learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real-world conditions.

It will take time after the vaccination for your body to respond and make enough antibodies to protect you. This could take up to one to two weeks after your last dose. Current information suggests that it is possible that someone who has been vaccinated against COVID-19 may still have a mild or asymptomatic infection or spread the virus to others.

So it is important to continue taking precautions. Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others, stay at least 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds and wash your hands often.

## **Will the COVID-19 vaccine be free?**

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccine will be free. Vaccine providers may be able to charge administration fees for giving the shot but they will be billed to insurance with no out of pocket cost to the patient.

## **Do COVID-19 vaccinations need to be reported into the Georgia Registry for Immunization Transactions and Services (GRITS)?**

Yes, every single COVID-19 vaccine administered in the state of Georgia needs to be reported into GRITS. If you need assistance with reporting into GRITS, please contact the GRITS Help Desk at 1-866-483-2958.

## **I was vaccinated and need a vaccination record showing proof of receipt. Where can I obtain my vaccination record showing my COVID-19 vaccination?**

First, check with the healthcare provider or location where you received the COVID-19 vaccine. They may be able to provide you with a record of COVID-19 vaccine receipt. If they are not able to provide you with this information, you can request your vaccination record from the Georgia Immunization Program by completing the Immunization Record Request Form located on the GRITS homepage <https://dph.georgia.gov/immunization-section/georgia-immunization-registry-grits> . Please follow the instructions on the form for returning your request to GRITS.

## **Can I still enroll as a COVID-19 vaccination provider/location?**

Yes, you can still enroll to be a COVID-19 vaccination provider. Please visit [dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine](https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine). Once on the page, select "COVID Vaccine Information" under the GA Providers and Healthcare Professionals section. This page will provide you with information on how to enroll.

## **I am a healthcare provider in private practice, where can I go to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?**

Private physicians and healthcare workers (dentists, pharmacists, etc.) should pursue vaccination one of three ways.

- Those affiliated with a hospital should contact the hospital to learn about their distribution plan for staff and affiliated physicians.

- If a physician and their office staff is not affiliated with a hospital, they may contact a hospital or a public health clinic for vaccine options. A list of public health clinics and their contact information can be found at <https://dph.georgia.gov/media/60761/download>

Healthcare workers with potential for direct and indirect exposure should seek out vaccination options as soon as possible.

For information about COVID-19, visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus> or <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

*Revised 12-20-2020*