



COVID-19 Vaccination Frequently Asked Questions

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 disease is caused by a coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. It is predominantly a respiratory illness that can affect other organs. People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms ranging from mild to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms may include: fever or chills; cough; shortness of breath; fatigue; muscle or body aches; headache; new loss of taste or smell; sore throat; congestion or runny nose; nausea or vomiting; diarrhea.

Why is it important to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Administration of the COVID-19 vaccine is an effort to build immunity to the COVID-19 virus, thus reducing its spread.

What is different about the COVID-19 vaccine?

mRNA vaccines are a new type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. 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—or even just a piece of a 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.

How is the COVID-19 vaccine administered?

The vaccine is administered as two injections into muscle. It is important that an individual receive the second injection from the same vaccine manufacturer as was administered for the first injection. The Pfizer vaccine is administered in two doses 21 days apart. The Moderna vaccine is administered in two doses 28 days apart.

Which vaccine are NCH and its affiliates receiving?

The first supply of vaccines received were manufactured by Pfizer. NCH and its affiliates have now also received the Moderna vaccine.

When will the vaccine be available for administration at NCH affiliates?

North Country Healthcare (NCH) hospitals received their initial supply of vaccines on Tuesday, December 15, 2020. Administration of the vaccine to their phase 1a high risk employees has begun.

Who is eligible to receive the first doses of the vaccine received?

The initial supply of the vaccine is limited. Per DHHS phase 1a guidelines, employees of NCH and its affiliates are classified into one of a number of tiers, the priority of which takes into consideration the level of direct patient care and any health conditions which may increase the risk of infection.

When will I be able to get my vaccine?

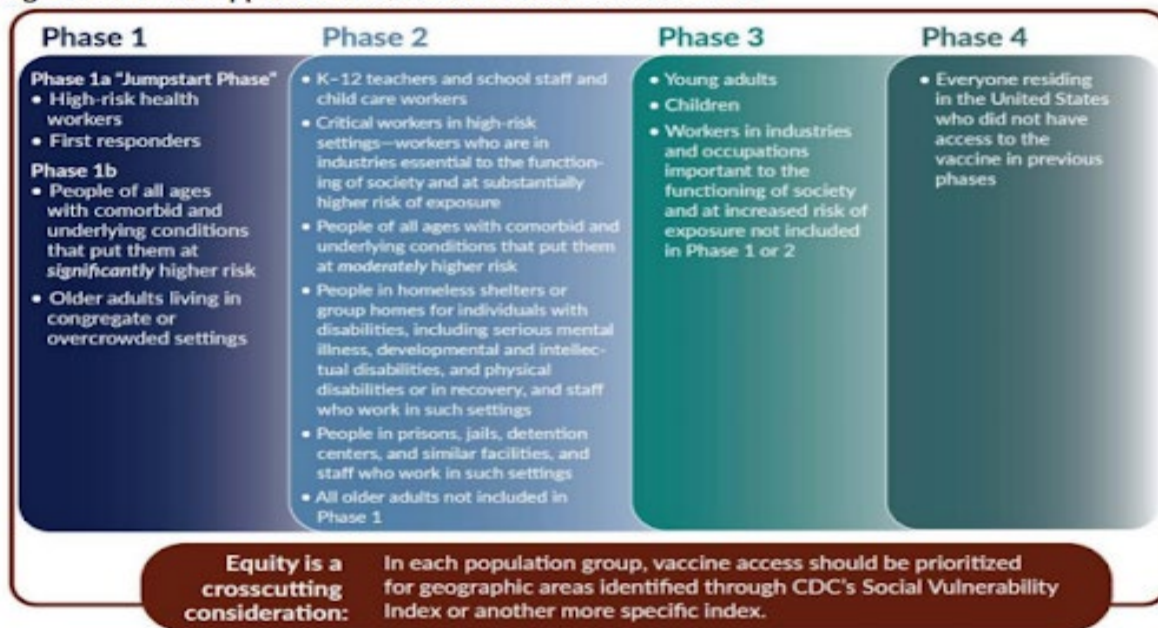
When a sufficient supply is received, access will be expanded to First Responders, then to those within Phase 1b and then to those in the remaining Phases as outline in the chart below.

State health officials estimate that it could be six to 12 months until there is “widespread access” to the vaccine. They say they will be vaccinating those in phase 1a -- a group that includes over 100,000 people -- until the middle of January.

The next stage, 1b, includes people with comorbidities that put them at significantly higher risk, and older adults living in congregate settings. If you fall into a high-risk group, you could get the vaccine in the coming months, but health officials estimate that the general public could begin getting vaccinated in the spring.

New Hampshire COVID-19 Vaccination Plan

Figure: A Phased Approach to Vaccine Allocation for COVID-19



What is the cost of the vaccine?

There is no charge to you to receive the vaccine.

How safe is the vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccines have undergone clinical trials which tested for both safety and efficacy. The FDA has authorized use of the Pfizer vaccine to prevent COVID-19 in individuals 16 years of age and older. The FDA has authorized use of the Moderna vaccine to prevent COVID-19 in individuals 18 years of age and older.

What is an emergency use authorization?

Drugs and vaccines have to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ensure that only safe and effective products are available to the American public. In situations when there is good scientific reason to believe that a drug is safe and is likely to treat or prevent disease, the FDA may authorize its use even if definitive proof of the efficacy of the drug is not known, especially for diseases that cause high mortality. Emergency use authorizations were granted by the FDA Commissioner for chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine (later revoked) and for the use of convalescent plasma to treat hospitalized patients with COVID-19. Many are concerned that Emergency Use Authorization for a vaccine could be issued prematurely, before sufficient safety and efficacy data have been generated through phase 3 clinical trials. It is important to emphasize that the bar for ensuring safety of a vaccine is higher than for a therapeutic to treat an ill person. Vaccines are given to potentially millions of healthy people, unlike drugs for sick people, and loss of trust in a vaccine for SARS-CoV-2 could spill over into loss of trust in other vaccines, seriously jeopardizing public health.

Is the vaccine a live vaccine?

No. There is no live virus in the vaccine.

What is the efficacy of the vaccine?

Following two doses from the same manufacturer, recent clinical trials have shown the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to be 95% and 94% effective respectively in preventing COVID-19.

Should I get the vaccine?

NCH encourages you to speak with your healthcare provider about your risk factors and interest in receiving the vaccine. Take this time to research reputable sources such as CDC or manufacturer and ask any questions about the vaccine until it becomes available in phase 1b – phase 4.

If I already had COVID-19, should I still get a vaccine?

Even if you have recovered from COVID-19, you can still benefit from vaccination. There is evidence in hospitalized patients that the infection was so overwhelming that the immune response became exhausted and so immune memory to the virus was not created efficiently. Also, if you had a very mild infection, your immune system may not have reached the point of laying down immune memory. Therefore, vaccination could be beneficial, regardless of whether you experienced severe or mild disease.

What are common side effects of the vaccine?

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle Pain
- Joint Pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Reactions at the injection site

What should I do if I experience side effects?

Call 9-1-1 or go to your nearest hospital if you experience a severe allergic reaction.

If you experience non-emergent side effects which bother you or which persist, please contact your healthcare provider.

Track all side effects via CDC's **v-safe** app, referenced below.

What should I alert the vaccine administrator to before I receive the vaccine:

- Allergies
- Fever
- Bleeding Disorder / being on a blood thinner
- Immunocompromised / on a medicine which affects your immune system
- Pregnancy / planning to become pregnant (see below)
- Breastfeeding
- Have received another COVID-19 vaccine
- Have received the Influenza vaccine or any other vaccine within the previous 14 days

Should I receive the vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

- After an evidence-based review of all available data, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) issued interim recommendations for use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in persons aged ≥ 16 years for the prevention of COVID-19 ([CDC 2020](#)) and the use of the Moderna-1273 COVID-19 vaccine in persons aged ≥ 18 years ([CDC 2020](#)).
- ACOG recommends that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant individuals who meet criteria for vaccination based on ACIP-recommended priority groups.
- COVID-19 vaccines should be offered to lactating individuals similar to non-lactating individuals when they meet criteria for receipt of the vaccine based on prioritization groups outlined by the ACIP.
- NCH highly recommends having a conversation with your Obstetrics clinician.

Who do I contact to receive the vaccine?

Watch for local COVID-19 vaccine clinic postings as we receive vaccines in 2021.

If I receive the vaccine, should I still wear a facemask?

Yes, for several reasons:

- The effect of vaccinations are not generally immediate.
- It remains uncertain if the vaccines protect the recipient from the infection, or just the symptoms.
- It will take several months to administer the vaccine to all those who wish to be vaccinated.

I got vaccinated. Now what?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is asking everyone who receives a COVID-19 vaccine to download and use their new app, **v-safe**. According to the CDC website, the app:

*uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after you receive a COVID-19 vaccination. Through **v-safe**, you can quickly tell CDC if you have any side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Depending on your answers, someone from CDC may call to check on you and get more information. And **v-safe** will remind you to get your second COVID-19 vaccine dose if you need one.*

Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

The NH Department of Health and Human Services website:

<https://www.nh.gov/covid19/index.htm>

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration

<https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>