



Frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine in Oregon

(Updated 1-8-2021)

General

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

A1. Vaccination is a safe, effective and reliable way to prevent getting infected with 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 I still need to wear a mask after I get the COVID-19 vaccination?

A5. The vaccine will keep you from getting sick, but it still may be possible to get, carry and transmit the virus. Preventing illness and severe illness is certainly a reason to get vaccinated. It will also take time for us to get everyone vaccinated. We don't yet know when we'll be able to stop wearing masks and maintaining physical distance, but OHA will continue to watch the spread of the disease in Oregon. When the spread of disease is low enough, these additional protective measures can be stopped.

Q6. How much will it cost for me to get the COVID-19 vaccination?

A6. For now, vaccine doses will be given to everyone at no cost. However, vaccination providers may charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Vaccine providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

Q7. Will there be enough COVID-19 vaccine for everyone?

A7. 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.

Q8. How will Oregon ensure equitable vaccine distribution?

A8. As COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) will ensure the distribution process is based on community involvement that will provide an equitable system challenging the roles of power, privilege and racism— informed by a newly assembled COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee (VAC).

The individuals who may receive vaccinations in Phase 1a are specified in Oregon's Phase 1a Vaccine Sequencing Plan which can be found on the OHA COVID-19 vaccine website: <https://covidvaccine.oregon.gov>.

Q9. How will Oregon implement Phase 1a?

A9. Oregon's Phase 1a Vaccine Sequencing Plan can be found on OHA's COVID- 19 vaccine website: <https://covidvaccine.oregon.gov>

Q10. Will OHA force me to get a COVID-19 vaccination?

A10. 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.

Vaccine distribution in Oregon

Q1. When will the COVID-19 vaccine be available in Oregon?

A1. COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Oregon on Dec. 15, 2020. The first rounds of doses are going to health care workers who are exposed to COVID-19 through their work. This includes people who work in hospitals or EMS staff. Also, people who work or live in long-term care facilities are included in the first round.

Q2. Who decides which hospitals will receive the vaccine?

A2. All hospitals in Oregon will get vaccine. The number of doses a hospital receives will depend on storage capabilities (if there is an ultra-low temperature [ULT] freezer capable of storing Pfizer vaccine), how many health care workers are employed in that county, whether the hospital's enrollment is complete and whether they are registered in the system with CDC and OHA.

- Vaccine will be distributed evenly across sites within a county and then adjusted for estimated health care population size

Q3. How will health care workers outside of hospitals get the vaccine?

A3. Oregon is taking steps to simplify the process for health care workers, first responders and other workers who provide frontline care to Oregonians to get vaccinated.

If you're in a frontline role defined in Phase 1a, and you work outside a hospital or a skilled nursing facility, you are eligible to get vaccinated during Phase 1a rollout. Phase 1a will take time to implement. OHA is working with local public health agencies, hospitals, local clinics and pharmacies to arrange opportunities for you to get vaccinated in your community. The Health Authority's goal is to ensure every frontline health care worker has the chance to be vaccinated by the middle of February, if the federal government provides the state with the doses we've been promised.

Q4. Who decides which workers will get the vaccine first?

A4. OHA is committed to an equitable distribution of vaccine. OHA's community engagement team assembled a [COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee](#) to listen to community members and provide input on how to prioritize vaccine distribution. This committee will identify and prioritize which critical workers will receive vaccine first, knowing that, in time, there will be enough vaccine for everyone who wants one.

Q5. I am an education worker. When will I get vaccinated?

A5. Child-care and K-12 school and school district staff will be in the first group of Phase 1b, after Phase 1a is complete. Information on where and when to get vaccinated will be provided as soon as it is available.

Q6. 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?

A6. Yes, OHA will report 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>.

Q7. Will vaccines need special storage?

A7. 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.

Q8. Can you tell me how many/which hospital systems have the cold storage ready for the Pfizer vaccine?

A8. Five Oregon hospitals have ultra-cold storage and are receiving Pfizer vaccine. Many other hospital systems are in the process of identifying ultra-low temperature storage units and setting them up to store the Pfizer vaccine.

Q9. Are you buying more ultra-cold storage freezers?

A9. 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. We haven't determined specific sites and communities yet. 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.

Vaccine details:

Q1. I've already had COVID-19 and recovered. Do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine when it's available?

A1. According to the CDC, COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to people regardless of a history of COVID-19 infection, with or without symptoms. They don't recommend testing to check for prior infection when deciding to get the vaccine.

Q2. I'm pregnant. Can I get a COVID-19 vaccination?

A2. 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

Q3. Are the vaccines interchangeable?

A3. 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.

Q4. Is the COVID-19 vaccine a live virus?

A4. The mRNA vaccines are not a live virus.

Q5. Will the Pfizer vaccine remain at freezing temperatures when it is injected? Or will it be warmed up?

A5. The vaccine will be diluted and stored in a refrigerator or at room temperature up to six hours before the vaccination.

Q6. What are the COVID-19 vaccine’s side effects?

A6. 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.

Q7. What if I have a bad reaction to my COVID-19 vaccination?

A7. 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.

**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. The ALERT IIS vaccine system will help make sure you get a reminder.

Q9. Can a person receive the COVID-19 vaccine while they are sick?

A9. Those with mild illness may receive the vaccines with no effect on vaccine safety or effectiveness. However, it is better that you recover from your illness, with no symptoms, before getting vaccines to keep from spreading your illness to health care workers who are administering the vaccine.

Q10. If one spouse or partner qualifies for a vaccine (i.e., over 65, doctor, nurse) would the other spouse who does not fit qualification criteria also get the vaccine?

A10. No. There will be very limited quantities of the vaccines in the early days of distribution, so only those who are in priority groups in the first phases, such as health care workers, identified workers, older adults and those with underlying medical conditions will be able to receive the vaccines.

Q11. Are both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine the same amount? Is the second dose less or more than the first dose?

A11. Both doses are the same amount for the Pfizer vaccine. The Moderna vaccine also uses two doses that are the same.

Q12. Can I get other shots at the same time as my COVID-19 vaccine?

A12. 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.

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