



COVID-19 Vaccine Information

The following documentation has been prepared in support of our valued clients and serves as an up-to-date resource regarding the COVID-19 vaccine and its distribution. We will regularly update this resource as new information becomes available.

Background

Three approved vaccines are currently recommended in the United States to protect against COVID-19. They have met the essential safety and efficacy criteria established by the World Health Organization (WHO). The Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines have been authorized for emergency use by the FDA under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to prevent Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The emergency use of these products is only authorized for the duration of the declaration that circumstances exist justifying the authorization of emergency use of the medical product under Section 564(b)(1) of the FD&C Act, unless the declaration is terminated or authorization revoked sooner. These vaccines have proven to be highly effective in protecting against COVID-19. The Moderna and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines have been approved in the U.S. for use in individuals 18+ years of age; the Pfizer vaccine is approved in the U.S. for use in individuals 16+ years of age.

While current COVID-19 vaccines are covered through funding authorized under the CARES Act, vaccine administration fees are paid for by the payer. The CARES Act requires issuers to cover any qualifying coronavirus preventative service (including a COVID-19 vaccine) without any cost-sharing requirements, such as copays, coinsurance, or deductibles.

To ensure COVID-19 vaccines are administered and billed correctly, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a set of toolkits for providers, states, and issuers on November 5, 2020. VerusRx is prepared to receive information from vaccinators to comply with regulations and efficiently record administration of the vaccine as required. More information from CMS can be found [HERE](#).

Priority of Vaccine Distribution

While vaccine supplies remain limited, distribution will be offered in a phased approach to certain prioritized populations through a limited set of providers and pharmacies. Initial phases of vaccine distribution have been set by the CDC and are subject to change by state:

- Phase 1A: Front-line healthcare workers and residents at long-term care facilities
- Phase 1B: Individuals 75+ and frontline essential workers
- Phase 1C: People 65+ and individuals age 16+ with a health condition which increases risk of severe COVID-19 illness.



VerusRx Pharmacy Network Information

Hospitals and long-term care facilities are currently receiving the COVID-19 vaccine as part of the initial rollout with select pharmacies next in distribution. Since the federal government plans to begin distribution to pharmacies in mid-February, we are working closely with those in our network regarding proper administration and reporting of the COVID-19 vaccine:

- Phase 1: CVS, Walgreens, Wal-Mart, Albertsons, The Kroger Co., Rite Aid, Hy-Vee, H-E-B, Meijer, and Costco
- Phase 2: Additional retail and community independent pharmacies locations – Timing TBD

FAQs

1. Will members be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine at network pharmacies?

Yes, vaccines will be available to prioritized populations in different phases and subject to variations by state.

2. Will the vaccine be restricted to certain pharmacies?

Supplies of the COVID-19 vaccine(s), are currently restricted to only U.S. government approved pharmacies, clinics, and healthcare providers to administer COVID-19 vaccines. Administration of the vaccine must be done in accordance with CDC and ACIP requirements as well as meet special storage and recordkeeping requirements.

3. Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

All vaccines approved by the FDA have gone through rigorous safety studies and have proved to be highly effective. Additionally, the CDC has implemented systems which are set to monitor any problems that may arise. Data collected from thousands of participants in clinical trials will help the FDA determine the ongoing safety of the vaccine.

4. What are potential side effects of the vaccine?

Mild side effects are normal signs the body is building protection. Common side effects include injection site reactions, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, and fever. These symptoms usually subside within a few days. The chance of severe reaction is less than .5%. However, both vaccines are contraindicated for individuals with a known history of a severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to vaccine components.

5. Can the vaccine give you the virus?

No. Unlike conventional vaccines, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are mRNA vaccines which do not contain live virus. The vaccine is created with the virus's genetic code or pathogen and are from natural substances, such as proteins.



6. How does the vaccine work to provide immunity?

All vaccines have the same objective, to train the immune system to fight the coronavirus. Both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna use RNA/DNA of the virus's genetic code. When injected into the system, the body produces the coronavirus's spike protein and thus creates an immune response. Unlike the mRNA vaccines of Pfizer and Moderna, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is a viral vector called Ad26. Viral vectors are common viruses that have been genetically altered so they do not cause illness but rather build up the immune systems defense against the virus.

7. How long will the COVID-19 vaccine remain effective?

Although some vaccines provide long-lasting immunity, there is not enough information available to evaluate the duration of protection from the COVID-19 vaccine. Scientists will continue to collect long-term immunity data to determine if changes to the COVID-19 vaccine are needed and to determine whether additional dosing is required.

8. What is the recommended timing of vaccine administration?

While the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine only requires one dose, both the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines require two doses. Given the lack of data to support the efficacy of alternating vaccine types, it's recommended to get your second dose from the same brand as your first dose. The timing between your first and second dose depends on which vaccine you received:

- Moderna: 4 to 6 weeks after your first dose
- Pfizer: 3 to 6 weeks after your first dose

9. How much does the COVID-19 vaccine cost?

The vaccine itself is covered by the federal government through funding authorized by the CARES Act. Administration of the vaccine by a pharmacy or other provider will be paid for by the payer for those patients who have health insurance. For uninsured patients, administration fees will be paid to the pharmacy by the federal government through the Provider Relief Fund.

10. Is there anyone who should not get a COVID-19 vaccine?

There is no COVID-19 vaccine yet for children under age 16. Several companies have begun enrolling children as young as age 12 in COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials. Studies including younger children will begin soon.

There is no research on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant or breastfeeding women. Also, COVID-19 vaccination might not be recommended for people who have certain health conditions. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about whether or not you should get the vaccine.