

COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ for Call Center Agents

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General Information about COVID-19 vaccines

- There are 2 main COVID-19 vaccines – Pfizer and Moderna. Other vaccines are in development.
- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccine have been granted an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the FDA. This means the vaccine is considered safe and effective for the general public.
- The Pfizer vaccine is for individuals 16 years and older. The Moderna vaccine is for individuals 18 years and older.

How do the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines Work?

- Both vaccines use a technology known as mRNA. The mRNA vaccine helps our body develop immunity against COVID-19. This means that your body will quickly recognize the virus that causes COVID-19 and will protect you from getting sick.
- The mRNA vaccine does not change your DNA.
- The mRNA vaccine is not live and does not cause COVID-19.
- The vaccine does not contain microchips.
- For more information on mRNA vaccines you can go here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mrna.html>

Vaccine Availability

Who is being vaccinated right now? What Phase are we in?

Members of Priority Group 1A. Full list at coronavirus.baltimorecity.gov/covax. New guidelines from MDH call for Healthcare workers, residents and staff of nursing homes, first responders, public safety, corrections, and frontline judiciary staff to be vaccinated.

Who is vaccinating these populations?

- Hospital systems are responsible for vaccine administration to hospital-based healthcare workers.
- The CDC's Pharmacy Partnership is coordinating the distribution and administration of vaccination in congregant living facilities, and both CVS and Walgreens have partnered with CDC to distribute and administer vaccines to LTCF staff and residents.
- BCHD is responsible for vaccinating first responders and non-hospital-based healthcare workers and those providing essential services to health care systems, including:
 - Public Health vaccinators and those administering COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 1A.
 - Emergency Medical Services/Fire Department
 - COVID-19 testing staff: People providing testing at large community testing centers
 - Lord Baltimore TRI Center staff
 - Convention Center Field Hospital staff
 - Baltimore City Health Department Clinical Services and Syringe program staff
 - Urgent Care Staff
 - Dialysis Center Staff
 - Clinic-based primary care staff (internists, family practice, pediatricians, geriatricians)/Federally Qualified Health Centers
 - Home health staff
 - Correctional facilities/Detention Center health care staff
 - Public Health/Baltimore City Health Department Staff
 - Law Enforcement: Police Department
 - Law Enforcement: Correctional facility officers, Sheriff's Office, Department of Public Works Police
 - Dentistry (including Dentists, Dental hygienists, dental technicians)
 - Pharmacy (including Pharmacists, Pharmacy technicians)
 - Phlebotomists
 - Community Health Workers
 - Home and Community-based visiting program staff

- Specialty out-patient clinical providers and staff
- Outpatient surgery center providers and staff
- Student Health staff at non-hospital affiliated academic institutions
- Laboratory staff
- Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy
- Chiropractors
- Optometry
- Audiologists, Speech Pathologists
- Podiatry
- Behavioral Health (including Counselors, Harm Reduction Workers, Therapists, Psychologists, and Social Workers)
- Nutritionists
- Morticians/Funeral Directors

Some examples of roles that fall into the “providing services essential to the maintenance of public health and healthcare systems” may include:

- Community Health Workers
- Medical/Nursing Assistants or Medical/Nursing aids
- Front desk/Patient registration
- Medical/Dental/Surgical/ Pharmacy/Nursing/Laboratory Technicians
- Phlebotomists
- Home health aides
- Environmental Services

Governor Hogan announced on January 5th that **all** licensed, registered, and certified health care providers qualify for COVID-19 vaccinations in Phase 1A. For the full list of applicable positions, visit the website for the [Maryland Code for Health Occupations](#).

I am a non-hospital based health care worker, when will I receive the vaccine and how do I sign up?

- The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) will be administering Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine for Priority 1A group members from **January 11th – January 29th**. To determine eligibility and to register, please visit coronavirus.baltimorecity.gov/covax.
- Primary care/private practice clinics can go to <https://coronavirus.baltimorecity.gov/information-clinicians-0> to sign up for the Baltimore City Health Department Provider Outreach Updates. We will contact you via the outreach updates when vaccine will be available for you and your staff

I am a hospital-based health care worker, when will I receive the vaccine?

- Baltimore City is following the Maryland Department of Health (MDH)'s vaccine priority group guidance. In Phase 1A of the MDH priority groups – health care workers, Long Term Care Facility residents and staff and First Responders are prioritized to receive the vaccine. During Phase 1A the supply of vaccine will be limited and there is a need to prioritize vaccine within these groups.
- Hospitals received vaccine to administer to their employees directly from the Maryland Department of Health. Hospital systems are currently vaccinating their employees, and are using various systems to allocate vaccine. It will take sometime for hospital systems to vaccinate all of their staff. If you have any additional questions, reach out to your supervisor at work to find out how vaccine is being distributed at your hospital.

When can I receive the vaccine? (general public, not healthcare worker or first responder)

- Baltimore City is following the Maryland Department of Health (MDH)'s vaccine priority group guidance. In Phase 1A of the MDH priority group guidance – health care workers, Long Term Care Facility residents and staff and First Responders will receive the vaccine. Vaccine supply is currently limited and groups that are more likely to be exposed to individuals with COVID-19 disease or are more likely to be hospitalized or die from COVID-19 are being prioritized. As vaccine supply increases more people will be able to receive the vaccine. We expect additional updates around vaccine supply and allocation from MDH as vaccine production increases. You can visit coronavirus.baltimorecity.gov/covax to review the Phases and see which priority group you fit into. We will communicate how and when to sign up for vaccination for each Phase when there is vaccine available for the priority groups within that Phase.

Will families/households be vaccinated at the same time?

- At this time, people will have to register individually to receive a vaccine appointment.

How do I know what Phase we are in?

- MDH with guidance from the CDC will determine what Phase we are in. We are currently in Phase 1a. You can go to <https://covidlink.maryland.gov/content/vaccine/> to learn more about the Phases and follow which Phase the state is in.

Clinical considerations

Who can get the vaccine?

- Anyone who is 16 years and older can get the Pfizer vaccine. Anyone 18 years and older can get the Moderna vaccine. The only reason a person can't get the vaccine is if they have had a severe allergic reaction to any of the vaccine components in the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.
- Individuals that are pregnant or breastfeeding may receive the vaccine and should speak with their doctor if they have any additional questions.
- Individuals with chronic medical conditions can receive the vaccine.
- Individuals that have had COVID-19 in the past can receive the vaccine.

Can children get vaccinated?

- At this time, the Pfizer vaccine is for individuals 16 years and older. The Moderna vaccine is only for adults, 18 years and older. The FDA will determine which age groups and populations are eligible to receive vaccine. Vaccine trials recently have started including children.

Who *cannot* get the vaccine?

- If you have a history of severe allergic reaction to any components of the COVID-19 vaccine you can not receive the vaccine. Polyethylene glycol (also known as PEG) is a component of the vaccine. You should speak with your doctor if you have any concerns. You can go to <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html> (Appendix A) to see the components of the vaccine.
- If you had a severe allergic reaction to Dose #1 of the COVID-19 vaccine you cannot receive Dose #2.
- If you are unable to receive the vaccine because of history of severe allergic reaction to any component of the COVID-19 vaccine you should continue to protect yourself from COVID-19 by wearing a mask, social distancing, washing your hands and avoiding large crowds. Speak with your doctor about what other action you can take. There are other COVID-19 vaccines that are being developed. These vaccines work differently than the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and most likely will be made of different components. These vaccines are still being studied and have not been authorized for use yet. You may be able to get these vaccines when they become available. You should speak with your doctor for additional information.

Can I get the vaccine if I have a history of severe allergic reactions?

- If you have a history of severe allergic reaction/anaphylaxis or immediate allergic reaction of any severity to any components of the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine you cannot receive the vaccine. Polyethylene glycol (also known as PEG) is a component of the vaccine. You should speak with your doctor if you have any concerns. You can go to <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html> (Appendix A) to see the components of the vaccine.
- If you have a history of immediate allergic reaction of any severity to polysorbate you cannot receive the vaccine.
- If you had a severe allergic reaction to Dose #1 of the COVID-19 vaccine you cannot receive Dose #2.
- If you have a history of immediate allergic reaction to any vaccine or injectable therapies you should speak with your primary care doctor before getting vaccinated. Your primary care doctor may want to refer you to an allergy specialist, known as allergist-immunologist.

Vaccine Effectiveness

How effective are the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines?

- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccine are highly effective (>94%) in preventing COVID-19 disease.
- The vaccines are also highly effective in preventing severe outcomes from COVID-19, like hospitalization.

How long will immunity last after vaccination?

- Experts are still studying how long the immunity against COVID-19 last after vaccination. This information is not known yet.

Vaccine administration

How many times do I have to get the vaccine shot?

- The vaccines require 2 separate doses (Dose #1 and Dose #2). You are not fully protected after Dose #1. You have to get Dose #1 and Dose #2 to be fully protected from COVID-19.
- Dose #1 and Dose #2 must be given a few weeks apart. For the Pfizer vaccine the doses are 21 days apart. For the Moderna vaccine the doses are 28 days apart.
- After you receiving Dose #1 you will be given information about when to return for Dose #2.

Where on the body is the vaccine given?

- The vaccine is given in your upper arm muscle. Most vaccines are given this way, including the influenza vaccine.

Vaccine side effects and safety

What side effects will I experience?

- After getting the vaccine you may experience side effects. These side effects are common and usually mild to moderate. They usually go away 1-3 days after vaccination. These side effects are a sign that the immune system is working.
- Side effects may include:
 - Pain, redness or swelling at the injection site
 - Fever
 - Headache
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle pain
 - Joint pain
 - Fever
 - Lymph node swelling (can occur in the arm pit area)
- Some people may experience more side effects after Dose #2.
- If you experience any of these side effects after vaccination you should contact your doctor.
- After you are vaccinated you can register to have your health monitored through the “V-SAFE After Vaccination Health Checker.” This is a smartphone app that will let you tell CDC if you are experiencing any side effects. It will also send you reminder for Dose #2. The link to sign up for V-SAFE will be given to you after your first vaccine appointment. If you have already received Dose #1 in the last 6 weeks you can sign up for V-SAFE at <https://vsafe.cdc.gov>.

How do I report if I have a problem or bad reaction after getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

- First, call your doctor.
- CDC and FDA encourage the public to report any problem or bad reaction after vaccination to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). You can e-mail info@vaers.org or call 1-800-822-7967 to report.

Considerations for after vaccination

What happens after I get vaccinated?

- You will receive a card documenting administration of your vaccine doses. Try to hold on to this card. If you lose the card, contact your doctor so they can look in a system known as Immunet for your vaccine record.
- Make sure to set a reminder to return for Dose #2
- Sign up for V-SAFE to report any side effects. You can sign up for V-SAFE at <https://vsafe.cdc.gov>.
- You can monitor for side effects and take pain medication or fever reducing medication to help manage side effects. If you experience side effects speak with your doctor.
- Continue to wear your mask, social distance and wash your hands. You are not fully protected until you receive Dose #1 and Dose #2. It will take some time before most of the general public is fully vaccinated with both doses. In order to protect those that are not yet vaccinated continuing to [practice safety guidelines](#) is extremely important.

What should I do if I feel sick after receiving the vaccine?

- After vaccination you may experience fever, fatigue, headache, pain at the injection site, muscle aches, joint pain, lymph node swelling. These side effects are common and can last 1-2 days.
- If you are experiencing any other symptoms, such as cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of smell or taste, runny nose you should speak with your doctor. These symptoms are not typical after COVID-19 vaccination.

What should I do if I miss my appointment for the 2nd dose?

- If you miss your appointment for the 2nd dose, immediately re-schedule the appointment so you can get Dose #2.
- You are not fully protected against COVID-19 until you have received Dose #1 and Dose #2.

Will I have to continue to wear a mask, social distance and frequently wash my hands after I am vaccinated?

- Yes, we are all in this together Everyone – vaccinated or not – must continue to wear your mask, social distance and wash your hands. It will take some time before most of the general public is fully vaccinated with both doses. In order to protect those that are not yet vaccinated continuing to practice safety guidelines is extremely important.
- There is not enough information right now to say if or when CDC will stop recommending wearing a mask and social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Experts need to understand about the protection the COVID-19 vaccine provides before making this decision. Other factors like how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities will affect the CDC's decision.

When will herd immunity against COVID-19 be reached?

- At this time, experts do not know what percentage of people would need to get vaccinated to achieve herd immunity to COVID-19.
- Herd immunity is a term used to describe when enough people have protection from COVID-19, that it is unlikely the virus can spread from person to person and cause disease.

Vaccine Cost

How much will the vaccine cost?

- The vaccine is free of charge. You do not need insurance to get the vaccine
- The CDC states vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccination providers will be able to 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.

Primary Care Follow-Up and Vaccine Resources

Where can I go for medical advice if I do not have a primary care doctor?

If you do not have a primary care doctor, Baltimore City has multiple Federally Qualified Health Centers that provide medical services. These clinics serve the uninsured. Most locations offer a sliding fee scale. For more information you can go to: <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/health-clinics-services/primary-care-clinics-uninsured>

List of clinics for Call Center Agent review:

https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/FQHC%20List%20PDF_3_12_2020.pdf

Where can I go to get more information on vaccines?

To receive information about Baltimore City's COVID-19 Vaccine response, visit coronavirus.baltimorecity.gov/covax.

You can go to CDC's website to learn about the COVID-19 vaccine: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

To learn more about the Pfizer vaccine the FDA has information in multiple languages: <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine>

To learn more about the Moderna vaccine the FDA has information in multiple languages: <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/moderna-covid-19-vaccine>

To get general overview of COVID-19 vaccines and learn about the most up to date science: <https://www.statnews.com/topic/vaccines/>

COVID-19 vaccine for those who are pregnant, trying to conceive, or breastfeeding or pumping:

We highly recommend anyone who is pregnant or breastfeeding get both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. We also know this is a personal choice. In addition to reading the facts below, please talk with your health care provider about any questions or hesitations.

To date, these specific vaccines have not been studied in pregnant humans. However, doctors and scientists feel confident recommending that pregnant and lactating people get a COVID-19 vaccine because:

- the effects of similar vaccines have been studied during pregnancy and did not show negative effects
- the COVID-19 vaccine has been studied in pregnant rats and did not show negative effects
- the COVID-19 disease itself tends to be more severe in pregnant people

Thus, **receiving the vaccine is believed to be safer than getting COVID-19.**

COVID-19 vaccines cannot cause COVID-19 infection.

- The vaccine may cause uncomfortable side effects. This is a normal reaction caused by the body developing antibodies to protect against COVID-19 illness.
 - Injection site reactions (e.g., redness, soreness) are the most common.
 - Other common reactions are achiness and fatigue.
 - In most cases, any side effects will be less severe and resolve faster than the effects of the virus itself.
- Since the vaccine does not contain the virus, there is no risk of breastmilk containing the virus. We do not yet know about other ways these specific COVID-19 vaccines impact lactation. Similar vaccines have not shown any risk to an infant receiving breastmilk.
- The COVID-19 vaccine cannot change your DNA, the DNA of your fetus, or the DNA of your baby via breastmilk.
- There is no evidence that the vaccines impact fertility, including egg and sperm quality or quantity. You may get the vaccine while trying to conceive.
- Vaccines from both companies have been shown to be about 95% effective at preventing COVID-19 illness after the second dose. Since people under 16 years old cannot get the COVID-19 vaccine, you will help protect babies and children by getting yours.