

COVID-19 Vaccines

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine at my wellness center?

Many Premise Health wellness centers have the COVID-19 vaccines and are doing their part to get our members vaccinated. Now that everyone over the age of 12 can get vaccinated, we plan to continue to obtain and administer the COVID-19 vaccines in accordance with federal, state and manufacturer guidelines. You should reach out to your local wellness center directly to see if it's available and to schedule an appointment.

Regardless of if/when the COVID-19 vaccine is available at your wellness center, our staff will act as a valuable resource for guidance on the vaccine, as well as continued COVID-19 testing and support. Please visit our COVID-19 resource page at members.premisehealth.com/covid19 for more information and ways we can support you through the pandemic.

Can I stop wearing my mask and social distancing if I get the vaccine?

For the most part, those who are fully vaccinated can begin to resume most pre-pandemic activities. However, to maximize protection against the Delta variant of the virus and to prevent spreading it to others, the CDC recommends that vaccinated individuals wear masks in public indoor spaces while in areas of substantial or high

transmission. You can find a map that shows active transmission rates here: covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view.

Fully vaccinated people will also need to continue to wear a mask while on public transportation, such as trains, planes and buses and where it is required by laws, rules, regulations or local guidance. The CDC recommends wearing a mask regardless of the level of transmission in your area if you or someone in your household is unvaccinated or at an increased risk for severe disease.

The CDC has published full guidelines for fully vaccinated people and how to choose safer activities. If you are unsure on any of the guidance, have a conversation with your healthcare provider or review the information provided in the CDC guidelines here: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html.

If you are not fully vaccinated, the CDC recommends that you continue to wear a mask while in public, practice social distancing and avoid large gatherings until you are fully vaccinated.

Note: If you received your vaccine but have a condition or are taking medications that may weaken your immune system, talk to your provider to discuss safety protocols.

You may not be fully protected by the vaccine and may need to keep taking all the safety precautions to protect yourself from COVID-19. You may also be eligible for a third dose if you received an mRNA vaccine.

Can I choose which vaccine I get?

You likely will not be able to choose the vaccine you receive. It will depend on your local area and what is available there, based on what your state health department can order and distribute. It may also depend on what your local hospital, wellness center or pharmacy can accommodate. However, children ages 12 to 17 can only get the Pfizer vaccine, so those in that age range will only be able to get an appointment with a site that offers the Pfizer vaccine. Similarly, children ages 5 to 11 can only receive the pediatric vaccine from Pfizer at this time.

It is important to know that all the vaccines currently available in the U.S. are highly effective, safe and help prevent hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

Should everyone get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Studies on COVID-19 vaccine safety in young children are still ongoing, so the CDC has not recommended those under the age of 5 get the vaccine at this time. It's important to note that only the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been authorized by the FDA and the CDC for children 12 years of age and older and a pediatric vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. The two other authorized vaccines from Johnson & Johnson and Moderna are still only approved for people 18 years and older.

Although the guidance was unclear at first, the CDC and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists now recommend that all pregnant individuals get vaccinated. Pregnant individuals are at a significantly higher risk for complications from COVID-19, including hospitalization and risks to the pregnancy.

As of now, experts recommend that all other populations get the COVID-19 vaccine to help slow the spread and ultimately end the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are unsure if you should get vaccinated, talk with your healthcare provider.

If I've already had COVID-19, do I need to get the vaccine?

Yes, people who have had COVID-19 are eligible to receive the vaccine and should do so. If you currently have COVID-19, you should wait until the end of your isolation period before you get your vaccine.

Do I need to get the second dose of my vaccine if I'm already partially protected with my first shot?

Yes, because your antibody development and protection against the virus is based on having two doses of the vaccine. For full protection, you need your second dose and should get it even if you had side effects after the first shot (unless your provider tells you otherwise).

If you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which has only one dose, you are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after you receive it.

When am I considered fully vaccinated and protected from COVID-19 after getting a vaccine?

You are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after your second dose in a two-dose series and two weeks after a single dose vaccine.

Boosters are available for everyone who has had the J&J vaccine, and for certain groups who completed the mRNA vaccine series (Moderna and Pfizer).

Immunocompromised individuals qualify for both a 3rd mRNA dose and a booster dose. Talk to your provider if you fall within this group.

Do I need an additional dose if I've already been vaccinated for COVID-19?

The U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) recently authorized, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends, a third dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine for people with a compromised immune system after their initial two doses. Individuals with a medical condition that significantly impacts their immune system may not have achieved optimal immunity from their initial COVID-19 vaccines. These immunocompromised people may remain at high risk for more serious COVID-19 infections after only two shots. If you are immunocompromised due to an organ transplant, cancer, advanced HIV or any other reason and think you qualify for a third dose, you should contact your provider at your wellness center for guidance. They can help you find out if

you're eligible and get you your third dose as soon as possible.

What about booster shots?

Booster shots are available under an emergency use authorization (EUA) for both mRNA vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna). Vaccine recipients may qualify for a booster shot if they received their initial doses of Pfizer or Moderna at least 6 months ago and are in the following groups:

- Adults over 65 years old
- Residents of long-term care facilities
- Adults 18-64 with underlying medical conditions
- Adults at high-risk of disease from occupational and institutional exposures to COVID-19, including health care workers

Recipients of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine are also eligible for a booster shot if it's been at least 2 months since their previous dose.

Eligible people can receive the same vaccine as their first or second dose, or they can choose a different vaccine for their booster if they prefer.

If you believe you fall within one of these groups and qualify for a booster shot, reach out to your provider at your local wellness center.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Yes. Although the authorizations were prioritized to expedite getting vaccines to the public, the standard safety trials and procedures were followed to ensure safety and effectiveness. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) follows rigorous standards and will only give emergency use

authorization (EUA) if the vaccine candidates meet their qualifications.

The FDA and CDC are also continuing to monitor the authorized vaccines as they're being administered to the public to ensure continued safety and efficacy. In fact, on August 23, 2021 the FDA gave full approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for individuals 16 years of age and older. The vaccine continues to be under EUA for individuals ages 5 to 15.

What is the difference between FDA emergency use authorization and FDA approval?

In certain types of emergencies, the FDA can issue what's called an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). This is used to provide timely access to critical medical products that may help during the emergency when there are no other options. The EUA standard may permit authorization based on less data than would be required for full approval, enabling the organization to authorize use within weeks rather than months to years. EUAs are in effect until the emergency declaration ends but can be revised or revoked as needs are evaluated during the emergency and new data becomes available.

An FDA-approved vaccine on the other hand, has undergone the agency's standard process for reviewing medical products, including vaccines. The review process is extensive. In the case of the COVID-19 vaccines, FDA approval builds on the data and information that supported the EUA, such as preclinical and clinical data and information, in addition to details of the manufacturing process and inspections at the sites where the vaccine is made. The

FDA's review of this data is among the most comprehensive in the world. The Pfizer vaccine is the only COVID-19 vaccine in the U.S. that has received full FDA approval as of now. However, the other two COVID-19 vaccines under EUA (Moderna and Johnson & Johnson) are expected to apply for full approval soon.

Whether you have access to a vaccine with full approval or not though, you should get your COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible, due to the continued surge of COVID-19 variants as the virus mutates. The EUA vaccines have proven effective at preventing severe symptoms and hospitalization.

Is it safe for my child to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been authorized for children 5 years and older. Studies have shown that it is safe and effective for children. Like adults, children may have some mild to moderate, temporary side effects after being vaccinated. Although not as many children have gotten seriously ill from COVID-19 compared to adults, they can still get sick and spread the virus. With the Delta variant spreading rapidly, more children are getting seriously ill and being hospitalized at higher rates than they were last year. That's why it is important to get them vaccinated if they are eligible, to protect your family and others.

I heard mRNA vaccines are new and haven't been fully tested. Are they safe?

While mRNA vaccines seem new, researchers have been studying them for decades. They were a favorable choice for the COVID-19 vaccine because they can be

created in a lab using readily available materials, which means they can be developed faster than more traditional methods of making vaccines. Basically, rather than triggering an immune response with a weakened or inactive virus, the mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response and helps produce antibodies against the SARS-CoV-2 virus to protect us from future infection.

Can any of the currently available vaccines change my DNA?

No, your DNA is inside your cells. The vaccine components never enter your cells' DNA and do not affect your genetic code.

Were clinical trials only done on young, healthy people?

No. All the vaccines available under the emergency use authorization (EUA) in the U.S. were tested in a diverse group of adults and children spanning different races, ethnicities and ages. There were no significant safety concerns identified in these or any other groups in the clinical trials.

What are the potential side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines?

Some participants in the clinical trials reported temporary, mild to moderate side effects after receiving their vaccine. The side effects were fairly similar to the flu vaccine and included pain at the injection site, fatigue, headache, fever and aching muscles and joints for a day or two.

In addition to the more common side effects listed above, there are rare cases of more serious side effects, such as neurological and cardiac conditions. The

CDC has more information about these risks here: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/safety-of-vaccines.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/safety-of-vaccines.html). They have also provided healthcare providers and vaccine recipients, or their caregivers, with information about what to look for in the rare event that a person develops an adverse reaction.

In general, side effects to the vaccines are temporary and mild to moderate in nature. These side effects are preferable to the alternative of getting COVID-19, so they should not deter you from receiving the vaccine. These side effects are a sign that your immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to do – working and building up protection to disease.

What about the allergic reactions caused by the COVID-19 vaccines?

Of the tens of thousands of vaccine trial participants, there have been very few serious side effects reported. Some individuals have had allergic reactions to the vaccine, but it is extremely rare. As a precaution, you will be asked about any history of severe, life-threatening allergic reactions prior to being vaccinated. Everyone who receives the vaccine will be required to wait 15 minutes after vaccination for observation and 30 minutes if you have a history of anaphylaxis to ensure you do not have an unexpected, adverse reaction to the vaccine.

If you have a history of severe allergic reactions, particularly to vaccines, ask your provider for further guidance on whether you should get the COVID-19 vaccine.

How effective are the vaccines at preventing COVID-19?

All the authorized and approved COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. have been deemed highly effective at preventing COVID-19 after going through clinical trials. While no vaccine is 100% effective, you're much less likely to get COVID-19 if you've had the vaccine. Also, it not only prevents you from getting sick or severely ill with the disease, but it might also protect those around you.

It's also important to note that the vaccine may prevent severe illness and long-term symptoms of COVID-19 if you get it. This is important, because even young survivors who were physically fit prior to getting COVID-19 have reported lingering symptoms months after infection. This is called post-acute COVID-19 syndrome (PACS for short). PACS symptoms can include fatigue, difficulty breathing, cough, joint pain, chest pain, cognitive impairment, depression, muscle pain, headache, fever and heart palpitations. More serious complications of COVID-19 can include heart disease, acute kidney injury, rash, hair loss, smell and taste dysfunction, sleep dysregulation, depression, anxiety and changes in mood.

If I get the COVID-19 vaccine, can I still get the virus? What is a breakthrough infection?

Yes, there is a small chance you could still get COVID-19 after receiving the vaccine because even though the authorized COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective, no vaccine is 100% effective. So, even though you could potentially still get the virus, you're much less likely to get it if you've had the vaccine.

Breakthrough infections, or infection occurring after being fully vaccinated, are less common compared to the number of unvaccinated people contracting COVID-19. Breakthrough infections in vaccinated people make up a small percentage of current COVID-19 cases, hospitalization and deaths. Also, data shows that typically breakthrough infections in vaccinated people are mild and do not require hospitalization.

What about the COVID-19 variants? Do the vaccines protect against them?

Viruses often change and mutate, so new variants of COVID-19 are expected and have already started to emerge in the U.S. Currently, the research suggests that the vaccines currently available in the U.S. are effective against the different variants circulating throughout the country. The CDC and World Health Organization (WHO), as well as many medical groups and vaccine manufacturers, are closely monitoring the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines against the Delta variant and are prepared to make changes if needed, much like the process taken each year with the flu vaccine.

Will I have to pay for the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine is provided free of charge in the U.S. However, providers can charge a fee for administering the shot to you. Your insurance will likely cover this added fee and there are public funds to cover fees for those without insurance, so cost should not be a barrier to getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Where can I get my COVID-19 vaccine?

First check with your local Premise Health wellness center. They may have the vaccine and you can schedule an appointment

there. If not, they can also help you find a vaccine near you.

Another option is to visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find vaccination providers near you.

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccine, please reach out to your healthcare provider or check out: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/)