

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 still 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?

Yes, with a few exceptions. As of May 13, 2021, the CDC announced that fully vaccinated people can resume pre-pandemic activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing, unless it is required by federal, state or local law, or by local business and workplace regulations. For now, fully vaccinated people will still have

to wear a mask while on public transportation, such as trains, planes and buses. The CDC has published full guidelines for fully vaccinated people and how to choose safer activities.

Note: If you received your vaccine, but have a condition or are taking medications that may weaken your immune system, you should 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.

If you are unsure on any of the guidance, you should discuss with your healthcare provider or review the information provided in the [CDC guidelines](#).

If you are not fully vaccinated yet, 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.

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 12-17 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.

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

It's also significant to note that blood clotting and low platelets are very rare side effects of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, but women under the age of 50 especially, should be aware of the rare risk after vaccination and know that other COVID-19 vaccines are available. This rare side effect is not a side effect of the mRNA vaccines, from Pfizer and Moderna.

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 12 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 or older. The two other authorized vaccines from Johnson & Johnson and Moderna are still only approved for people 18 years and older.

Also, pregnant women and those who are immunocompromised can get the vaccine but are encouraged to discuss any questions they may have with their healthcare provider first.

As of now, experts recommend that all other parts of the population should get the COVID-19 vaccine when it's made available, to help slow the spread and ultimately end

the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are unsure, 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 already 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, since 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, that is only a 1-dose vaccine and 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.

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 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.

What about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine went through the clinical trials necessary to deem its safety and efficacy. It was issued on February 27, 2021 for Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the FDA to prevent COVID-19 in those 18 and older.

On Tuesday, April 13, 2021 the CDC and FDA issued a statement regarding the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine (also known as the Janssen vaccine). By that time, over seven million Johnson & Johnson vaccines had been administered. Of the seven million, fifteen individuals, mostly women between the ages of 18-48, developed a rare blood clotting disorder within 1-3 weeks of receiving the vaccine. The CDC and FDA recommended a pause in the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine out of an abundance of caution.

On Friday, April 23rd, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) determined that the vaccine's known and potential benefits outweigh its known and potential risks and voted to lift the pause of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. The FDA and CDC have expressed

confidence that this vaccine is safe and effective in preventing COVID-19 and have issued a joint statement that administration of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine may resume, effective immediately.

The pause of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine shows that the regulatory standards are in place to continue monitoring the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines and should not deter you from being vaccinated.

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

Yes. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been authorized for children 12 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. 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 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.

As noted previously, there has also been a very rare side effect associated with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Some individuals, mostly women between the ages of 18-48, who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine developed a rare blood clotting disorder within 1-3 weeks of receiving the vaccine. Although this side effect is extremely rare, the CDC and FDA paused administration of this vaccine, completed a thorough investigation and ultimately determined that it was safe to resume administering it as of April 23, 2021.

The CDC has 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 this 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.

If I am a woman between the ages of 18-48, and received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine before the pause, should I be concerned? Is there still a risk if I get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine now?

The blood clotting disorder that has been reported as a side effect of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is extremely rare and should not cause concern if you already received the vaccine or are planning to do so, since your chances of developing this side effect are very low.

Three weeks after vaccination, there is minimal to no risk of developing the rare side effect and the risk will continue to decrease over time. In the rare event that you develop any of the following symptoms, you should contact your healthcare provider:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Leg swelling
- Persistent abdominal pain

- Severe or persistent headaches or blurred vision
- Easy bruising or tiny blood spots under the skin beyond the site of the injection

Keep in mind that these symptoms are not the same as the more common side effects of all the authorized COVID-19 vaccines noted previously, which typically begin 1-3 days after vaccination and do not pose any risk for blood clotting or low platelets. Any vaccine or medication is going to come with some possible side effects, so these rare or temporary side effects should not deter you from getting a vaccine.

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, and 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 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?

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.

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. There are not enough studies to show how different the new variants are from what is currently circulating and if the current vaccines are as effective at protecting against it. However, vaccine developers and manufacturers will continue to watch and study the variants, 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 will be provided free of charge in the United States. 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.

Will there be enough supply of the vaccine for everyone?

The federal government is working with vaccine manufacturers to ensure adequate supply of the vaccine. The initial phased approach of administering the vaccine was meant to help with any supply and demand issues and to get the highest-risk populations vaccinated first. As of April 19, 2021, everyone that is 16 years of age or older is now eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine and you may start seeing more available.

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