

# COVID-19 Vaccine Information, Resources and Frequently Asked Questions

Information as of January. 15, 2021

**Note: Information about the COVID-19 vaccine is changing rapidly. As we learn more, we will update the following Frequently Asked Questions with new information.**

Town and Country Family Physicians is here to assist you and your family members during the Coronavirus pandemic. TCFP is here to meet your medical needs. We are providing the following information to our patients to answer frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccination. We will continue to keep patients informed regarding availability and vaccination timeline on this website and the Patient Portal.

Please check back here often for vaccine updates and share this page with family and friends who also may have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Information

COVID-19 vaccine appointments cannot be scheduled at this time.

In compliance with the State's [Phase 1B guidance](#) for vaccine distribution, Town and Country Family Physicians is currently notifying eligible patients via the Patient Portal or via phone calls only.

## Who can get the vaccine now?

Front-line healthcare workers and residents at long-term care facilities called ([Phase 1A](#)) plus people over 65 or with a chronic medical condition that puts them at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (called [Phase 1B](#)) are currently eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Phase 1B recipients include:

- People 65 years of age and older
- People 16 years of age and older with at least one chronic medical condition that puts them at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19, such as but not limited to:
  - Cancer
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
  - Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies
  - Solid organ transplantation
  - Obesity and severe obesity (body mass index of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or higher)
  - Pregnancy
  - Sickle cell disease
  - Type 2 diabetes mellitus

***If you have not received a direct invitation from TCFP via the Patient Portal or via a phone call, we cannot schedule you for the COVID-19 vaccine at this time. TCFP looks forward to offering COVID-19 vaccination to all our patients and members of the community, and will share updates as additional vaccine becomes available. We will send out notifications with specific instructions on how to schedule your appointment.***

## **COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance**

As we work diligently to vaccinate our patients and community as quickly as possible, we encourage patients to:

- ✓ Check our website and the Patient Portal for updates on the COVID-19 vaccine availability. As additional vaccine becomes available, notifications will be sent out to eligible patients to schedule their appointment.
- ✓ Be patient. Know that vaccines are only available in limited quantities and that vaccinations are currently only available to priority at-risk individuals. Keep in mind, due to limited availability of vaccine, it will likely take several months to vaccinate all those who are eligible.

## **About COVID-19 Vaccines**

Vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna have both been granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the FDA and are being distributed across the United States. Additional vaccines are currently in development.

### **Is the vaccine safe and effective?**

Before any vaccine is widely distributed to the public, it is tested in clinical trials on tens of thousands of people to determine its safety and efficacy. While development and authorization of the COVID-19 vaccines were accelerated, this does not mean that safety corners were cut; the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines went through the same stringent testing process that other vaccines go through before public dissemination.

### **Will the vaccine prevent me from getting COVID-19?**

It is a common misconception that vaccines prevent someone from contracting the virus. Vaccines train the body's immune system to recognize and fight viruses and bacteria. When the body is exposed to a virus after being vaccinated against it, the body is immediately ready to fight the illness. Because the body is able to respond more quickly, you are less likely to experience symptoms of the illness, especially severe and life-threatening ones.

### **How long will I be protected after receiving the vaccine?**

At this time, there is not enough data about the vaccines to know how long they will provide protection from COVID-19.

### **Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?**

No. The vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna were created with mRNA technology, which uses a gene from the COVID-19 virus, while other vaccines in development use an inactive form of the virus. None of the vaccines currently being tested use a live version of the virus, so a person who receives any of these vaccines cannot contract COVID-19 from the vaccination.

## **What side effects can I expect?**

Side effects may vary depending on which vaccine you receive, but some recipients of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have reported fatigue, headache, muscle and joint pain, swollen lymph nodes and pain at the injection site, which is generally the upper arm. Before you receive your vaccine, specific information about your vaccine's anticipated side effects will be provided to you.

## **Do I have to continue wearing a mask and practicing social distancing after I receive the vaccine?**

Yes. We all need to continue to follow the CDC guidelines by wearing a mask, watching your distance and washing your hands regularly until we know how long the vaccine protects against the virus and we gain community control of COVID-19.

## **Will the COVID-19 vaccine be one or two shots? How long after the first dose do I take the second one?**

All but one of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development need two shots to be effective. You need two doses from the same manufacturer, spaced 21 or 28 days apart. You will get full protection from the vaccine usually 1–2 weeks after getting your second dose.

At this time, experts do not know how long protection will last or whether a booster shot will be necessary later, after the initial recommended vaccine dose(s). CDC and DSHS will keep the public informed as they learn more.

## **Can I get the vaccine if I have been diagnosed with COVID-19?**

Guidelines recommend that patients who have been previously diagnosed with COVID-19 be vaccinated. Talk to your healthcare provider about the timing of your vaccination(s) if you have been sick with COVID-19.

## **Safety**

### **How do I report it if I have a bad reaction to a vaccine?**

CDC has a new smartphone-based tool for this effort called v-safe. This tool helps CDC check in on people's health after they receive a COVID-19 vaccine. When you get your vaccine, you should also receive a v-safe information sheet telling you how to enroll in v-safe. If you enroll, you will get regular text messages directing you to surveys. Use these surveys to report any problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

Read about v-safe with the [V-safe Information Sheet](#) (PDF).

According to CDC's website, 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. Those may include ones that are unexpected, ones that appear to happen more often than expected or ones that have unusual patterns of occurrence. Reports to VAERS help CDC monitor the safety of vaccines. Safety is a top priority.

For more information about the difference between a vaccine side effect and an adverse event, visit the [Understanding Side Effects and Adverse Events](#) section of the CDC website.

For more information about the reporting system, visit the [VAERS](#) website or call 800-822-7967.

You should also let your doctor know about your reaction. According to CDC, healthcare providers will need to report some vaccine side effects to VAERS.

## **More Information**

### **Where can I get reliable information about vaccines for COVID-19?**

Three excellent sources of reliable information are the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

#### **DSHS**

[COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#)

#### **CDC**

[COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccine Safety](#)

[8 Things to Know about the U.S. COVID-19 Vaccination Program](#)

[What to Expect after Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

[V-safe After Vaccination Health Checker](#)

#### **FDA**

[COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

[FDA Homepage](#)

#### **Vaccine Provider FAQs**

See the [COVID-19 Vaccine Provider FAQs](#) for answers to common questions for vaccinators in Texas.

#### **General COVID-19 FAQs**

See the [COVID-19 FAQs](#) for answers to general questions about COVID-19.