

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINE



IS THE COVID-19 VACCINE SAFE?

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccines have been carefully evaluated in clinical trials and were authorized for use because they have been shown to substantially minimize the risk of getting COVID-19. Experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may also prevent serious illness even if you do get COVID-19.

WHAT VACCINES ARE AVAILABLE?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized emergency use of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. The combination of vaccinations and ongoing compliance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations (e.g., use of masks, regular handwashing and physical distancing) offers the best protection from COVID-19.

WHICH VACCINE IS BEST?

Both available vaccines are 90 – 95% effective, yield the same result with no significant difference and are administered as a series of two doses: Pfizer doses are three weeks apart; Moderna doses are four weeks apart. They are not interchangeable, meaning after receiving your first dose you should receive the second dose of the same vaccine to complete the series.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

Potential side effects are minimal for most people and should go away in a few days. General side effects can include pain, tenderness and swelling in the arm of the injection or flu-like symptoms, such as fatigue, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, nausea, vomiting and fever. Talk with your doctor if you have had a severe allergic reaction after a previous vaccine or if you are allergic to any ingredients of this vaccine.

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT IS SAFE FOR ME?

It is true that, in the past, vaccines have taken years to develop. Thanks to decades of development and experience scientists now know a lot about vaccine strategy. No stages of development were skipped, but they did occur simultaneously. An important fact is that these vaccines do not use the live virus and will not cause COVID-19.

HOW IS THE VACCINE BEING DISTRIBUTED?

Because the current supply in the United States is limited, initial supplies are being offered in priority order and coordinated by each state.

WHO WILL PAY FOR MY VACCINE?

The vaccines are being given within the U.S. at no cost. However, vaccination providers are allowed to charge an administrative fee for giving the shots.

DO PEOPLE WHO HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 NEED TO BE VACCINATED?

The vaccine is recommended for all persons regardless of their history of COVID-19 infection.

ARE WE OFFERING THE VACCINE?

At this time, we do not have the ability to administer the vaccine.

IS THE NEW COVID-19 VACCINE SAFE FOR CANCER PATIENTS OR OTHERS WITH COMPROMISED IMMUNE SYSTEMS?

While the immunization of cancer patients is still in review, the CDC is recommending that cancer patients be vaccinated. Based on experience with other similar types of vaccines, no major side effects or unique side effects have been reported in immunocompromised patients. However, the vaccine may not be as effective for persons with cancer and other conditions. The decision is best made in consultation with each patient's individual healthcare provider and care team.

IS IT OKAY FOR CANCER PATIENTS TO RECEIVE THE VACCINE:

- **If undergoing chemotherapy, radiation or targeted therapy?**
These treatments may lessen the vaccine's effectiveness but at this point experts are not able to determine how much.
- **While receiving immunotherapy treatment?**
Vaccinations for these patients are generally encouraged. This form of treatment may actually stimulate the immune system instead of suppressing it.
- **While participating in a clinical trial?**
Because these are not live vaccines these types are often permissible in a clinical trial. However, clinical trials usually have specific guidelines regarding inclusion and exclusion so it is important to consult your physician prior to getting the vaccine.
- **While undergoing surgery?**
Patients should allow for a certain number of weeks in between their vaccination and surgery, consult with your physician to determine the best timeframe.
- **While undergoing or have undergone a bone marrow transplant?**
The idea of a bone marrow transplant is to wipe out the immune system and bring in a new rejuvenated system. The bone marrow will need time to generate a new immune response, therefore it is important to consult with your hematologist to know the best time to receive the vaccine for the most effective results.
- **For survivors and those in active surveillance?**
Patients under surveillance or those cancer free for more than five years should be vaccinated. Consult with your physician about specific questions or concerns.