

# COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ



There are a lot of questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, and we're happy to help answer those questions with important information from local, state and national health experts. Check out the information below to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, including the benefits of the vaccine, how the vaccine was developed and tested, how and when you can get a vaccine, and much more.

## How did scientists ensure the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective?

Like all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines are required to meet the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) safety and effectiveness requirements before it is made available to the public. There are several factors that helped accelerate the development and testing of COVID-19 vaccines, including major government funding and technological advances. Usually, vaccine development and trials happen one after the other, and it can take some time. For COVID-19 vaccines, the federal government provided substantial additional funding to conduct vaccine development and trials at the same time, making the process more efficient. While it was a faster process, it was still a rigorous process. To ensure vaccines are safe and effective, the FDA required the same three phases of clinical trials it does for any vaccine. Read more from the FDA about the COVID-19 Vaccine Development and Approval Process [here](#).

## When will the COVID-19 vaccine be available?

The first round of COVID-19 vaccines begins distribution in December. Because the initial supply of vaccines is very limited, COVID-19 vaccines will not be immediately available to everyone who wants one. COVID-19 vaccines will be distributed in phases until the vaccine is more readily available.

Colorado's distribution phases are based on federal guidelines. In Colorado, and in most of the country, the COVID-19 vaccine will be distributed first to people most at risk for COVID-19, such as health care workers, first responders, and staff/residents of long-term care facilities and nursing homes. The next phase of vaccinations will be available to higher risk individuals and essential workers. The final phase will make vaccines available to the general public.

You can take a closer look at the state's COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan [here](#). For answers to other COVID-19 vaccine questions, visit the [COVID-19 vaccine page on El Paso County Public Health's website](#).

## Who will get the COVID-19 vaccine first?

The initial supply of COVID-19 vaccines is very limited, which means vaccines will not be immediately available to everyone who wants one. Health agencies across the country plan to distribute COVID-19 vaccines in phases until the vaccine is more readily available. Colorado will follow that model. Colorado has a COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan that's based on federal guidelines. Based on that plan, Colorado will be distributing COVID-19 vaccines in a phased approach, starting with those most at risk for COVID-19:

**Phase 1:** Certain health care workers, first responders, and staff/residents of long-term care facilities and nursing homes.

**Phase 2:** The next phase of vaccinations will be available to higher risk individuals and essential workers.

**Phase 3:** General public (anyone under 65 without high-risk health conditions)

## How many different COVID-19 vaccines will be available? Is one better than another?

Currently, there are multiple manufacturers developing COVID-19 vaccines, including Pfizer, Moderna, Janssen and Oxford Biomedica. Only the Pfizer vaccine has been approved in the United States, but there will likely be multiple COVID-19 vaccines available to the public in the near future. There will likely be some slight differences between them such as time between doses shelf-life, and when they are expected to be distributed within the United States.

Both Pfizer's and Moderna's COVID-19 vaccines require two doses. Both vaccines are more than 90 percent effective. Moderna's vaccine is expected to be distributed by the end of December; Pfizer's is currently beginning the distribution process.

To learn more about COVID-19 vaccines, their effectiveness, anticipated distribution and more, visit the [vaccine page on El Paso County Public Health's website](#).

## What are the benefits to getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

Like any vaccine, the COVID-19 vaccine is intended to prevent recipients from getting seriously ill even if they do get COVID-19. The vaccine may also protect people around you, because it could prevent spread of the disease, which is especially important for anyone at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools we have available. The combination of getting vaccinated and following everyday preventative measures will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

Learn more about the [benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine](#), so you will be ready when the vaccine is available to you.

## Will the COVID-19 vaccine make me feel sick?

In the trials that have been done so far for the COVID-19 vaccine, some participants have reported feeling slightly sick after receiving the vaccine, similar to what happens after getting a flu shot (minor cold-like symptoms). While some people may feel sick after getting a COVID-19 vaccine, the vaccine will not give you COVID-19. The vaccine protects you from getting COVID-19.

The Pfizer vaccine, and most COVID-19 vaccines that are awaiting approval, will require two doses, an initial dose and a booster. It's important that you get both doses, even if you feel a little sick after your first shot. The vaccine will not be fully effective if you don't receive both doses.

For more information about how the COVID-19 vaccine will work, talk to your doctor or visit the [vaccine page on El Paso County Public Health's website](#).

## Is it okay to get the flu vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine in the same year?

Getting a flu vaccine this year is more important than ever because we need to ensure our health care systems aren't overwhelmed during the pandemic. The COVID-19 vaccine is not yet available, but the flu vaccine is available now, which means you don't have to wait to protect yourself from flu.

The state health department recommends everyone age 6 months and older get the flu vaccine. Getting a flu vaccine will not protect you against COVID-19, but a flu vaccination will reduce your risk of getting the flu and being hospitalized because of the flu.

For more information on flu prevention visit El Paso County Public Health's website:

<https://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/influenza-flu-prevention>.

## How do I stay safe until I can get the COVID-19 vaccine?

We all must continue to practice prevention measures and follow public health guidance until a vaccine is widely available, which likely won't be until sometime in 2021.

Prevention measures like wearing a mask properly, staying at least six feet away from people not in your household, avoiding large crowds, washing your hands often, and staying home when we are sick are the best ways to keep yourself and your loved ones safe from COVID-19 until you are able to receive the vaccine.

For more information on COVID-19, and the best ways to stay safe and healthy, visit

[www.elpasocountyhealth.org](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org).