

COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

Vaccine Overview

Why should I get a COVID-19 Vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccination can keep you from getting COVID-19. It may also protect people around you, particularly those at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Vaccination is an important tool to help stop the COVID-19 pandemic.

How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

The vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna use a genetic molecule known as mRNA to prime the immune system against COVID-19. The mRNA is packaged in an oily bubble that can fuse to a cell, allowing the molecule to slip in. The cell uses the mRNA to make proteins from the coronavirus, which stimulates the immune system. While the mRNA is destroyed by our cells within days, the immune protection from the vaccine may last for months or even years.

How many doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will I need?

Both of the currently authorized and recommended vaccines to prevent COVID-19 require two doses to be effective. [Click here to learn more from Maine CDC Director Dr. Nirav Shah.](#)

How long after I get my second dose does my vaccination become effective?

For the two currently authorized vaccine, you are considered fully vaccinated approximately 10 days after your second dose.

If I don't get the second dose on time, do I have to start the vaccination process over?

Ideally, you should receive the 2nd dose after 21 or 28 days, depending on the vaccine. If this is not possible, the CDC advises that you receive your 2nd dose no earlier than four days before the recommended date and no later than 42 days from the first dose. There is not enough information known about the efficacy of a second dose administered outside of that timeframe.

Can I catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No. The vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. do not include any version of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

I contracted COVID-19 after receiving the first dose of the vaccine. How is this possible?

The first vaccine shot gives recipients roughly 50% immunity, which doesn't kick in for a week with the Pfizer vaccine and two weeks with the Moderna vaccine. For the greatest level of immunity, it is critical to get your second dose of vaccine. [Click here to learn more from Maine CDC Director Dr. Nirav Shah.](#)

I have already contracted and recovered from COVID-19. Do I still need the vaccine?

It is recommended that people get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they were previously infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. People who had COVID-19 can get the vaccine at any time after they have recovered from being ill with COVID-19. [Click here to learn more from Maine CDC Director Dr. Nirav Shah.](#)

How long does the vaccination provide protection?

Individuals receiving the vaccine achieve maximum protection approximately two weeks after the second dose is administered. While it is too early to know how long the vaccine provides protection, experts estimate its effectiveness may be a year or more. The CDC has indicated that because the vaccine is new, more data is necessary to make this determination.

Is this a one-time or annual vaccine?

Vaccination schedules for the currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines have yet to be determined.

Does the vaccine protect against all strains of COVID-19?

While the data is emerging, there are promising indicators that the vaccines currently authorized for use are effective against the variant strains of COVID-19, and pharmaceutical companies continue to test current vaccines against new strains. More data is necessary and more information is being shared on an ongoing basis. This is another reason why maintaining health and safety protocols, such as masking, social distancing and good hand hygiene is critical even after vaccination.

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

No, vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be provided at no cost. For people covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and most commercial insurance plans, the vaccine will be covered by insurance with no out-of-pocket cost. For uninsured individuals, the federal Provider Relief Fund will pay any administrative fees charged by participating providers.

Where can I access more information about the COVID-19 vaccine?

Woodfords has added fact sheets about both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines to the Vaccine Resources section of the Pandemic Resources webpage: <https://www.woodfords.org/pandemic-resources/>. You can also find this FAQ, as well as a link to the CDC website on COVID-19 vaccines. There are many other resources available on the Maine CDC website. If you have specific medical concerns, you can also contact your healthcare provider for guidance.

Where can I learn more about each of the approved vaccines?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has published detailed factsheets on each approved COVID-19 vaccine, which are available in multiple languages. Please find them here:

- [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#)

Vaccine Safety & Side Effects**How do I know the vaccine is safe?**

Each vaccine company's application to the federal Food and Drug Administration included two months of follow-up safety data from clinical trials conducted by universities and other independent bodies, during which tens of thousands of volunteers got a vaccine and waited to see if they became infected, compared with others who received a placebo. By September, Pfizer's trial had 44,000 participants; no serious safety concerns have been reported. While it is possible that a small number of adverse effects

occur following vaccination, the health risk from COVID-19 is far greater than potential complications from the vaccine.

Why aren't distributors or administrators of the vaccine liable for adverse reactions?

The federal government invoked the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act which provides legal protections for certain pharmaceutical companies working to develop COVID-19 vaccines in an effort to compel private entities to help solve an emergency health crisis. All COVID-19 vaccines authorized in the United States have undergone clinical trials and rigorous examination by the Federal Drug Administration to ensure the safety of the vaccines.

What are the possible side effects of the vaccine?

The injection into your arm won't feel different from any other vaccine. The side effects can resemble some of the symptoms of COVID-19, last about a day and appear more likely after the second dose. About half of those vaccinated report fatigue, and roughly 25% reported headache, low-grade fever and/or muscle or joint pain. [Click here to learn more about general side effects](#) and [here to learn more about the potential difference in side effects between the first and second doses](#) from Maine CDC Director Dr. Nirav Shah.

I have a medical condition – how will I know if the vaccine is safe for me?

Please discuss any concerns with your health care provider to determine your best course of action. For additional clinical guidance, [consult this U.S. CDC fact sheet](#).

If a staff member has been told by their PCP that they should specifically take the Moderna version of the vaccine due to allergies, are there any opportunities for them to receive this vaccine through MaineHealth?

Vaccines are being ordered and secured by the State of Maine on a weekly basis and distributed to vaccination sites based on volume. The specific brand of vaccine may vary. You should consult your vaccination clinic at the time of registration to inquire about which vaccine you will be offered. You will be told which vaccine you are being offered, but it may not be until just before your appointment.

What if I have an allergic reaction to the vaccine? How do I know if the side effects are normal or abnormal?

All vaccinations are administered by medical professionals who are trained to respond in the unlikely event that a person experiences an adverse reaction to the vaccine. Individuals are required to stay on-site for 15 minutes post vaccination and are monitored for abnormal reactions. If you have specific concerns regarding allergic reactions, you should consult your health care provider prior to receiving the vaccine.

Vaccine Eligibility

When will I be eligible to receive the vaccine?

You are currently eligible to receive the vaccine through certain clinics. Maine is using a phased approach to vaccination, and all Woodfords staff fall into the first phase of vaccination (Phase 1A). The State has categorized our staff into three sub-groups: 1A-1: direct care staff and others working in group

home settings; 1A-2: all other staff who interact regularly with consumers; and 1A-3: administrative and support staff.

Do part-time staff fall into the same priority category for vaccination as full-time staff?

Yes.

Are BHPs and others who are doing telehealth able to get the vaccine?

Yes. All BHPs at Woodfords are in the 1A-2 priority category. While Woodfords' clinics in partnership with CVS are currently open to only individuals in 1A-1, MaineHealth is vaccinating all individuals in the 1A-1, 1A-2, and 1A-3 priority categories.

I am pregnant and want to receive the vaccine at a later date? Will I still be eligible?

If you cannot receive the vaccine now, you will be eligible to participate in future clinics. Access to future clinics will be dictated by the availability of the vaccine.

If a Shared Living Agency isn't providing the vaccine for their providers, where would they be able to get it?

The Maine CDC has a [listing of all vaccination sites on its website](#). The qualifications for registering vary, as do methods of registration. Individuals should review the list and check back frequently for updates.

Does Woodfords plan on mandating the vaccine?

No, not at this time. Participation is voluntary. The State of Maine does require proof of certain vaccinations for specific positions. While the COVID-19 vaccine is not currently mandated for any position, that could change in the future.

If an employee decides not to get the vaccine, will they lose their job?

No. Receiving the vaccine is voluntary. Woodfords is not currently mandating that staff get the COVID vaccine.

Can my family members receive vaccination at a Woodfords vaccination clinic?

Unfortunately, no. The State has defined the order in which people become eligible to receive the vaccine, and we are required to adhere to their guidelines.

Will the vaccine be offered to outside providers visiting Woodfords programs to deliver services?

Woodfords is currently prioritizing the vaccination of employees. If an opportunity arises to offer clinics to outside providers, Woodfords will do so.

Vaccine Clinics

How do I register to get the vaccine through Woodfords?

Woodfords has partnered with CVS to hold clinics for all staff and consumers in the 1A-1 priority group. This includes staff and consumers in the residential and shared living programs. The agency will notify you when you are eligible to register for a clinic.

How do I register to get the vaccine through an outside clinic?

All employees are currently eligible to register for a vaccine appointment through MaineHealth. Registration is a two-step process. The first step is to call into an automated system for pre-screening. If you are screened into the 1A priority category, you will be placed into a queue and a representative will call to schedule an appointment with you as one becomes available. For more specific instructions, please refer to Mark Eve's 1/22/2021 email entitled "New Opportunity to Access COVID-19 Vaccine." As we become aware of additional resources, we will share them with staff.

Will clinics be available for extended hours for those who may not be able to get to an appointment during the day?

Clinic hours vary. Woodfords is working with CVS to provide extended hours at its clinics, and MaineHealth is currently offering clinics 7 am – 7 pm.

Will vaccination clinics be held at the Manchester office?

The agency has not yet determined if it can hold vaccination clinics in Manchester through its partnership with CVS. Current clinics have been held in Kennebunk. MaineHealth is currently offering clinics at a variety of locations statewide, and staff are eligible to register to receive the vaccine through these clinics. Due to many factors, including availability of the vaccine and individual clinic eligibility, staff may need to wait longer for access to the vaccine if they are not able to travel to an appointment offered in a specific location.

Can I get the vaccine on work time?

Please try to schedule the appointment outside of work time. If you need to take time off to attend a vaccine appointment, please make arrangements with your supervisor.

Do I have to receive the vaccine through Woodfords?

No. If you want to receive the vaccine, you should take advantage of any available opportunity to do so. This may be through another employer, a statewide health system, or your health care provider. Once you are vaccinated, please provide proof of vaccination to Human Resources for your employee record, as health and safety protocols for vaccinated staff may change over time.

How can I be assured I can get a second dose after the first?

You may have recently heard that a federal stockpile of vaccines expected to arrive in Maine in mid-January did not materialize. The Maine CDC has made it clear that they were not planning to use these additional vaccines as second doses, and the current production and procurement schedule will allow for you to receive your second dose on time.

What if I can't make the appointment for my second dose? Can I reschedule?

It is imperative that you plan to attend both your first and second appointment for vaccination. You must receive the second dose from the same provider and at the same location as your first dose. For clinics held at Woodfords, the agency has requested that CVS provide guidance to individuals who cannot make the second appointment, and has not received additional information. For clinics held elsewhere, staff should discuss appointment scheduling at the time of registration.

Vaccines and Agency Protocols

Why do I need to be vaccinated when I can prevent the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a mask and social distancing?

We need to use all the tools available to stop this pandemic. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask and staying at least 6 feet away from others help reduce your risk of exposure to the virus as well as the risk of you spreading it to others.

Once I am fully vaccinated, will I still need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others?

Yes. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before deciding to change recommendations on steps everyone should take to slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

Will staff continue to be required to wear eye protection after being vaccinated, or will masks be sufficient?

It will take several weeks for all staff to have the opportunity to be vaccinated and achieve maximum protection from the vaccine. Once Woodfords completes its vaccination clinics, the agency will determine, in consultation with the CDC, if vaccinated staff can safely remove eye protection. This would be a program-wide protocol change, and not implemented on an individual basis as staff complete the vaccination process.

Should I come to work if I am not feeling well due to side effects from the vaccine?

The CDC has released updated health screening tools to help you determine if it is safe to come to work while experiencing side effects. This guidance will be provided in the next iteration of program protocol updates.

If we do not feel well enough to come to work due to side effects of the vaccine, will we be compensated for our time out of work?

Staff who cannot work due to the side effects of vaccination should use their own sick time.

Other

Will Waterville Preschool be getting air purifiers for the classrooms?

Woodfords installed an air purification system as part of the HVAC system that reaches all classrooms in the Waterville preschool.