

COVID-19 COMMON VACCINE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe? Is the science sound?

Yes. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) carefully reviews all safety data from clinical trials and authorizes emergency vaccine use only when the expected benefits outweigh potential risks.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) reviews all safety data before recommending any COVID-19 vaccine for use. [Learn how ACIP makes vaccine recommendations.](#)

FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, to make sure even very rare side effects are identified.

COVID-19 vaccines were tested in large clinical trials to make sure they meet safety standards. Many people were recruited to participate in these trials to see how the vaccines offers protection to people of different ages, races and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions.

- mRNA technology is new, but not unknown. It has been studied for decades.
- mRNA vaccines do not contain live virus and carry no risk of causing disease in the vaccinated person.
- mRNA from the vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell and does not affect or interact with a person's DNA.

Q: When can I be vaccinated?

Southcoast Health is following the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health \(MDPH\) guidelines for prioritization.](#)

In Massachusetts, vaccination is prioritized into three phases.

Right now, we are vaccinating individuals who meet Phase One criteria: COVID-facing healthcare workers who work with patients and/or work in the vicinity of patients.

Healthcare workers who do not come into contact with patients or work in patient areas are included in either Phase Two or Phase Three prioritization.

Phase Two covers individuals at high risk (over age 75 or older or those with two or more comorbid medical conditions that put individuals at higher risk), essential

workers, individuals age 65 or over, and, finally, individuals with one comorbid medical condition.

Only certain comorbid medical conditions place individuals at higher risk for hospitalization, illness and death if infected with COVID-19.

For a complete list, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>.

Individuals who fit Phase Two criteria are likely to start being vaccinated in starting in February.

Healthcare and all other individuals' workers who do not fit into Phase One or Two criteria are prioritized in Phase Three – **along with the general public**. This phase is likely to start in late April.

We will continue to update the public as more information becomes available.

MDPH Vaccination Prioritization Phases



Image Source: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/when-can-i-get-the-covid-19-vaccine>.

Please note that the CDC uses different terminology for phases (e.g., Phase 1a, 1b, 1c). These phase names correspond to but are not exactly identical to the MDPH phases.

Q: I had COVID-19. Should I get vaccinated? ... I received my first dose of vaccine and then tested positive for COVID. When can I get my second dose?

The COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to you regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection. You should not be required to have an antibody test before you are vaccinated.

Individuals currently infected with COVID-19 should wait to get vaccinated until after their illness has resolved and after they have met the [criteria](#) to discontinue isolation.

Additionally, current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after the initial infection. Therefore, people with a recent infection may delay vaccination until the end of that 90-day period if desired.

If you received the first dose of vaccine and then tested positive for COVID-19, it is safe to get the second dose of vaccine once you have completed the required quarantine time and as long as you have fully recovered.

Q: Are there side effects with the vaccine? What do I do if I experience side effects from the vaccine? If I have side effects, can I still work?

Following vaccination, you may experience some common side effects that normally subside within 3 days, such as pain or swelling at injection site, low grade fever <101F, chills, fatigue, headache or muscle and joint pains.

Q: I am a spouse/partner/family member of a Southcoast employee. Can I be vaccinated in one of the Southcoast clinics now?

We will eventually be opening vaccination up to members of the public who don't work at Southcoast Health.

At present, however, we are offering vaccination only to those who work at or are affiliated with Southcoast Health and qualify under Phase One criteria as put forth by the CDC and Department of Public Health.

We will continue to provide updates on the vaccine at www.southcoast.org/covid-vaccine.

Q: Can I receive my second dose earlier or later than when I am scheduled to return?

Yes, but not earlier than four days ahead of your scheduled return date (as authorized by the CDC).

You may also receive the second dose on or after your scheduled return date. The CDC advises getting the dose as close to the return date as possible.

Q: I am lactating, is it safe to get the vaccine? ... I am pregnant. Is it safe to get the vaccine? ... I am thinking about becoming pregnant. Is it safe to get the vaccine?

We recommend that you consult your primary care provider or Obstetrician.

This [fact sheet](#) can help guide the discussion with your provider and help you make an informed decision about vaccination.

Q: Do I need to wear a mask when I receive a vaccine?

Yes. Please wear a face covering and maintain social distance before, during and after vaccination, at all possible times.

Q: Will I have to pay for the vaccine?

The vaccine is being provided free of charge to all individuals.

Insurance companies are not charging any out-of-pocket fees or co-payments related to COVID-19 vaccine administration, and all healthcare provider sites that receive COVID-19 vaccine must agree to not charge patients any out-of-pocket fees or deny anyone vaccination services who qualifies under the prioritization.

Q: Will there be enough vaccine for everyone?

Currently, two vaccines are authorized and recommended to prevent COVID-19 in the United States.

The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as sufficient quantities are available.

In Massachusetts and Rhode Island, COVID-facing healthcare workers, first responders and residents of long-term care facilities are currently prioritized and receiving the vaccine.

In the coming months, several thousand-vaccination providers will be in operation, including doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals and federally qualified health centers.