



COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs for Members

The state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) is following California's COVID-19 vaccination plan, which was approved by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). It calls for implementation in several phases.

For more information, please visit <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>.

Q: Will we have to pay for the vaccine?

A: No. The vaccine is being purchased by the federal government and will be provided to individuals at no cost.

Q: Where can we get the vaccine?

A: Pharmacies, retail clinics, providers (including those enrolled in managed care plans), and any other sites of care receiving and administering COVID-19 vaccinations. Appointments at county clinics and pharmacies can be scheduled online at <https://myturn.ca.gov> or by phone at 1-833-422-4255. Call Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can also schedule appointments at the county's pop-up vaccination sites through www.vcrecovers.org.

Q: When can individuals get the vaccine?

A: Vaccine supply is very limited. California is making sure these supplies are distributed and administered efficiently and equitably. Beginning April 15, people 16 years of age and older can register to get the vaccine. Sign up at <https://myturn.ca.gov> or call 1-833- 422-4255 to find out if it's your turn. If you are eligible, you can schedule an appointment or register to be notified when one is available.

Q: How can I get transportation to a vaccination site?

A: Gold Coast Health Plan (GCHP) offers transportation services through Ventura Transit Systems (VTS). If you need to be transported in a wheelchair or on a gurney, reach out to your provider for authorization. If you do not, call VTS directly to schedule a ride at 1-855-628-7433. If you use a TTY, call 711.

Q: Who do I reach out to if I'm having trouble getting the vaccine?

A: If you have any barriers that are preventing you from getting the vaccine, call GCHP's Member Services Department at 1-888-301-1228. If you use a TTY, call 1-888-310-7347. The team will connect you with the resources you need to help you get vaccinated.

Q: Is the vaccine safe?

A: 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 offer protection to people of different ages, races, and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has reviewed the vaccines for their safety and effectiveness before



granting Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for their use. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and its Advisory Committee for Immunizations (ACIP) has also reviewed the safety information of the approved vaccines.

In addition, California formed a [Scientific Safety Review Work Group](#) to independently review the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. Based on all these reviews, the vaccine is considered safe for use in Californians. Please refer to the [CDPH COVID-19 Vaccine Questions and Answers](#) page for additional details.

The FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines to make sure even very rare side effects are identified. Health care providers are required to report certain adverse events following vaccination to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

The CDC implemented a new smartphone-based tool called v-safe to check in on people's health after they receive a COVID-19 vaccine. When you receive your vaccine, you should also receive a v-safe information sheet telling you how to enroll in v-safe. If you enroll, you will receive regular text messages directing you to surveys where you can report any problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

Q: What does Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) mean for a vaccine?

A: In certain types of emergencies, such as with the current public health emergency, the FDA can issue an EUA to provide more timely access to critical medical products that may help during the emergency when there are no adequate, approved, and available alternative options. Please refer to the [CDPH COVID-19: Information for Laboratories](#) for additional information.

Under the EUA authority, the FDA evaluates requests for authorization very quickly using the evidence that is available, carefully balancing the risks and benefits of the product as we know them, in addition to evaluating other criteria. EUAs are in effect until the emergency declaration ends but can be revised or revoked as needs change during the emergency, or as products meet the criteria to become approved, cleared, or licensed by the FDA.

Q: How will safety be tracked once a COVID-19 vaccine is made available to the public?

A: After a vaccine is approved for use via EUA, scientists and health professionals will continue to carefully monitor its use. The [Vaccine Safety Datalink](#) in the U.S., which monitors many immunizations in California, is designed to report a safety problem in near real time so the public can be informed quickly of possible risks. Health care providers are required to report certain adverse events following vaccination to the VAERS.

When you receive your vaccine, you will also receive an information sheet telling you how to enroll in a program called v-safe that allows you to report problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine to the CDC. Additionally, the FDA and CDC will continue to carefully monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines to make sure that even very rare side effects are identified as early as possible. These are some of the ways that will help detect previously undetected issues related to the vaccines as early as possible.



Q: Is the vaccine helpful? I heard getting COVID-19 gives you better and longer immunity than the protection a vaccine can give. Can it actually make my illness worse if I do end up getting COVID-19?

A: COVID-19 vaccines prevent you from getting sick from COVID-19. If you get COVID-19, you risk becoming very sick and giving it to loved ones who may get very sick. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a safer choice. The ability of COVID-19 vaccines to protect us from spreading the virus to others is not yet known but is being studied carefully.

More detailed questions should be directed to your health care provider.

Even after being vaccinated, people will still need to practice other precautions, like wearing a mask, social distancing, handwashing, and other hygiene measures, until public health officials say otherwise. Additional information can be found here: <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>.

Q: Are there side effects associated with the vaccine?

A: Most people do not have serious problems after being vaccinated for COVID-19. Any minor symptoms usually go away on their own within a week. Providers will provide information and explain any potential side effects that can be expected with vaccination.

Q: Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

A: No, the vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 because it does not contain infectious virus. Additional information can be found here: <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>.

Q: Will there be any long-term side effects?

A: COVID-19 vaccines are being tested in large clinical trials to assess their safety. However, it does take time, and more people will need to be vaccinated before we learn about very rare or long-term side effects. That is why safety monitoring will continue. The CDC has an independent group of experts that reviews all the safety data and provides regular safety updates. If a safety issue is detected, immediate action will be taken to determine if the issue is related to the COVID-19 vaccine and determine the best course of action.

Q: How many shots will be needed?

A: Most COVID-19 vaccines require two shots. While the first shot starts building protection, everyone has to come back a few weeks later for the second one to get the most protection the vaccine can offer. Your vaccine provider will advise you when you should return for the second shot, as it varies by type of vaccine.

Q: If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with the vaccine?

A: Yes. There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again; this is called natural immunity. Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, and more studies are ongoing. Available evidence from clinical studies shows that the vaccine is safe in persons who have had prior COVID-19 infection or who have tested positive for it.



Those who had a diagnosis in the past three months should consider deferring vaccination for three months to allow other people to get vaccinated first (since natural immunity almost surely provides at least three months of protection).

Please consult your health care provider for additional guidance.

Q: Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received two doses of the vaccine?

A: Yes, refer to the covid19.ca.gov site. While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it remains important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop the spread of COVID-19, including covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, staying at least 6 feet away from others and avoiding crowded places.

Q: I have heard about herd immunity. What is it?

A: [Herd immunity](#) is a term used to describe when enough people within a population have protection — either from previous infection or vaccination — that disease spread slows and eventually stops within that population. As a result, everyone within the community is protected even if some people don't have any protection themselves.

Q: What percentage of the population needs to get vaccinated to have herd immunity to COVID-19?

A: Experts do not know what percentage of people would need to get vaccinated to achieve herd immunity to COVID-19. The percentage of people who need to have protection to achieve herd immunity varies by disease. At this time during the pandemic, we cannot rely on herd immunity to protect us from getting COVID-19.

Q: What is the risk of children getting sick with COVID-19?

A: Children can be infected and get sick with COVID-19. Most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, or they may have no symptoms at all, which is known as being asymptomatic.

Fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared to adults. However, infants (children less than 1 year old) and children with certain underlying medical conditions might be at increased risk for COVID-19. For further information, please consult your child's health care provider.

Q: How will vaccinations work for children? Can my child get a COVID-19 vaccine?

A: COVID-19 vaccination will be made available for children later in the vaccine roll-out process. The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has approval for ages 16 and above. In early clinical trials for various COVID-19 vaccines, only non-pregnant adults participated. However, clinical trials continue to expand those recruited to participate. The groups recommended to receive the vaccines could change in the future.

Q: Can I take the COVID-19 vaccine and the flu vaccine (or another vaccine) at the same time?

A: It is currently recommended that you not get any other vaccination for a minimum of 14 days prior to or after getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Please discuss this further with your health care provider.



Q: How long does it take to be protected after vaccination?

A: Although protection from the vaccine is not immediate, the first shot starts building protection. Two of the vaccines require a two-dose series, and it will take one-to-two weeks following the second dose to get the most protection the vaccine can offer.

Q: Who can I contact for more information?

A: For medical questions, please contact your provider. You can also call GCHP's 24-hour Advice Nurse Line at 1-877-431-1700. If you use a TTY, call 711.

GCHP's Member Services team is available to answer questions about your benefits. You can call the team at 1-888-301-1228 Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you use a TTY, call 1-888-310-7347.

Q: Where do I find general California guidance on COVID-19?

A: There are two California websites that offer general guidance on COVID-19. These are the [California Coronavirus Response website](#) and the [California Department of Public Health website](#). Check both websites frequently, as resources are regularly updated and added.

Q: Where do I find information about vaccinations in Ventura County?

A: You can find information on www.vcrecovers.org.

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ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-888-301-1228 (TTY: 1-888-310-7347).

ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-888-301-1228 (TTY: 1-888-310-7347).

注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-888-301-1228 (TTY: 1-888-310-7347)。