Frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine in Oregon

(Updated 3-22-2021)

General

Q1: Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccination?

A1: Vaccination is a safe, effective, and reliable way to prevent getting sick from COVID-19. It’s the best tool we have to help us end the COVID-19 pandemic in Oregon. By getting vaccinated, wearing masks, washing our hands, staying physically distant and avoiding large indoor gatherings we can help stop the spread. If enough of us get vaccinated, we can achieve community immunity and the virus will not spread quickly.

Q2: How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

A2: Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are messenger RNA, or mRNA, vaccines. mRNA vaccines give our cells instructions for how to make a harmless protein that is unique to the virus. The J & J vaccine is similar, but instead of delivering the message in a fat bubble, it utilizes the harmless shell of a cold virus to deliver the message to our cells. Our bodies recognize that the protein should not be there and build T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes that will remember how to fight the virus that causes COVID-19 if we are infected in the future. The CDC has additional information on how mRNA vaccines work.

Q3: Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

A3: Vaccination is the safest, most effective, and most reliable way to keep yourself, your family, and your community healthy and safe from COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines are 95% effective and have undergone rigorous safety testing. Thanks to advances in medicine, scientists were able to create and test a vaccine quickly. The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) requires rigorous safety testing before it will approve any vaccine. Tens of thousands of people — including Oregonians — from many backgrounds, ages, and communities of color, participated in vaccine testing.

Q4: Is the vaccine safe if I’ve had a bad reaction to a flu shot? What if my doctor told me not to get a flu shot again? What if I have a bad reaction to the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine?

A4: You should talk to your doctor about your specific situation. Let them know of any history of allergies or reactions to vaccines or injections.
The CDC recommends you do NOT get a COVID-19 vaccine dose if you've had:

- Severe allergic reaction (like anaphylaxis) after your first COVID-19 vaccine dose.
- Fast allergic reaction of any kind to a past dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, or any of its parts (including polyethylene glycol).
- Fast allergic reaction of any kind to polysorbate.
- If you have a history of immediate allergic reaction of any kind to any vaccine, injection, food, medication or insect venom, or if you have a history of anaphylaxis, you should be monitored for 30 minutes after getting your COVID-19 vaccine.

For more information, visit https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html#Appendix-A

**Q5: What does Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) mean?**

**A5:** In times of a public health emergency, like a pandemic, the FDA allows the use of certain life-saving drugs and treatments through Emergency Use Authorization. The COVID-19 vaccine was tested in tens of thousands of study participants, which generated enough data to convince the FDA that the vaccine is safe and effective, and the manufacturer producing the vaccine meets all safety standards.

**Q6: How soon do vaccines become effective?**

**A6:** All vaccines are considered effective two weeks after you’ve received the full series (1 dose for J & J; 2 doses for Pfizer or Moderna).

You will have some protection sooner, but for full protection, wait the full two weeks.

**Q7: Will there be enough COVID-19 vaccine for everyone?**

**A7:** The vaccine may be scarce at first, so distribution will be prioritized. But as COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing ramps up, eventually there will be enough vaccine for everyone. This timing depends upon how many vaccines are approved and the total supply of vaccine available through manufacturers. We hope by summer 2021, everyone who wants a COVID-19 vaccination can get one.

**Q8: How will Oregon ensure equitable vaccine distribution?**

**A8:** As COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) will ensure the distribution process is based on community involvement that will provide an equitable system, challenging the roles of power, privilege and racism— informed by a newly assembled COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee (VAC).

Using an equity framework, OHA will distribute COVID-19 vaccine in line with CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) recommended
phased approach. See who is eligible here: https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19

Q9: I’ve already had COVID-19 and recovered. Do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine when it’s available?

A9: Since the antibody levels drop after a natural infection, it is currently recommended that people who have had the illness be vaccinated to boost the immune response and provide longer term protection. A person who has tested positive for COVID-19 and still has symptoms should wait to the end of their isolation period (10 days, or 20 days) to get the vaccine to avoid infecting the person giving the vaccine. Those who have received monoclonal antibody treatments for treatment of COVID-19 should wait a full 90 days to get the vaccine.

Q10: Do I still have to keep wearing a mask and practice physical distancing after I get the COVID-19 vaccination?

A10: Yes. Vaccination is a critical tool in bringing this unprecedented pandemic to an end but until enough people are vaccinated we must embrace proven public health strategies including social distancing, good hand hygiene, and wearing a mask in public to reduce the risk of transmission and protect our communities.

Q11: Where can I find more information about the COVID-19 vaccines?

A11: Information regarding safety, sequencing, provider enrollment for administering vaccines and more can be found on the OHA COVID-19 vaccine website at https://covidvaccine.oregon.gov/

Eligibility

Q1: How do I find out if I am eligible to get vaccinated?

A1: Go to https://getvaccinated.oregon.gov to use the Get Vaccinated Oregon tool. It is designed to help you understand if you are eligible. You will want to register to get updates on vaccination opportunities. If you need help getting registered, ask someone to help or reach out to 211:

- Text ORCOVID to 898211
- Email ORCOVID@211info.org
- Call 211

Here is a list of who can currently get vaccinated.

Q2: I work in a school or a childcare facility, when can I get a vaccine?

A2: Childcare providers, early learning providers, K-12 educators and school staff in Oregon are eligible to be vaccinated now.
Q3: When can people 65 and older get vaccinated?

A3: Anyone 65 years of age or older can get vaccinated now. For a full list of who is eligible for vaccination and when, go to: https://covidvaccine.oregon.gov/.

There is still limited vaccine in the state, and it may be difficult to get an appointment for a vaccine but please keep trying.

If you need assistance:

- Text ORCOVID to 898211
- Email ORCOVID@211info.org
- Call 211

Q4: If one spouse or partner qualifies for a vaccine (i.e., education workers, older adults, health care provider) would the other spouse who does not fit qualification criteria also get the vaccine?

A4: No. There are still limited quantities of the vaccines, so only those who are part of a phase that is eligible will be able to receive the vaccines.

Q5: My permanent residence is in another state, but I’m staying in Oregon (student, multiple homes, staying with family, etc.). When it’s my turn, can I get my vaccine in Oregon?

A5: If you are currently residing in Oregon and meet Oregon’s eligibility criteria you may get your vaccine in Oregon.

Q6: Can people who work in Oregon but live in a bordering state get vaccinated in Oregon?

A6: If you live in a bordering state you are being included in that state’s population for purposes of vaccine allocation and you should get your vaccine from the state where you live, not the state where you work. However, if you are eligible for vaccination in Oregon because of your job – for example you are a health care worker at a hospital in Oregon or a teacher at an Oregon K-12 school, you can and should get vaccinated through your employer or at a mass vaccination or community clinic in Oregon.

Q7: Do I need to be vaccinated in the same county I live in? Or work in?

A7: If you are eligible to receive a vaccination, you are encouraged to get vaccinated in the county you live in, but you can get vaccinated in any county in Oregon.

Getting your vaccine:

Q1: Where can I get vaccinated?
**A1:** Vaccines are still limited but there will eventually be enough for everyone who wants one. Right now, places that are giving vaccines include local public health authorities or their partners, hospitals, and vaccination events. As the vaccine supply increases, you may be able to get vaccinated at other places. For now, due to the limited supply, your primary care provider (your doctor’s office) likely won’t get vaccines. You may also hear about vaccination events on the news. These events will have a way for you to make an appointment to get your shot.

**Q2:** Can patients admitted to a hospital who are currently eligible in Phase 1a or 1b receive vaccination as an inpatient?

**A2:** Yes, patients may receive a vaccination in the hospital, however most hospitals and health systems are not currently receiving vaccine allocations for this purpose. The majority of vaccine allocations to hospitals and health systems are designated for community events and should not be used to give preference to their own patients. The only exception is for certain psychiatric hospitals including the Oregon State Hospital which received vaccines for their patient population because they are residential congregate care settings. If a hospital vaccinates a patient who is admitted to their facility, they must ensure the patient, upon discharge, has an appointment for receiving the second dose.

**Q3:** Can hospitals/health systems vaccinate the patients they serve on an outpatient basis?

**A3:** Yes, hospitals and health systems have been important partners in the state’s COVID-19 vaccination efforts. However, hospitals and health systems should not use vaccine allocations designated for community events in a way that gives preference to their own patients (e.g., for closed events or private scheduling opportunities). Hospitals and health systems are encouraged to directly connect their patients and members to publicly available COVID-19 vaccine appointment portals and events.

**Q4:** Do I need to bring identification (ID) with me to prove my eligibility?

**A4:** You do not need documentation or specific identification to prove eligibility. Vaccine providers themselves may require you to declare, through a verbal declaration or in some other way, that you are in an eligible group before you receive a vaccine. You may be asked for insurance information, though the vaccination is free, and you cannot be asked to pay out of pocket for the vaccine administration fee. You will receive proof you have been vaccinated; do not lose the card you are given.

**Q5:** Do I need to provide a social security number to schedule a vaccine appointment?

**A5:** No. If you are asked for a social security number during the appointment scheduling process, you do not need to provide one and can leave that question blank.
Q6: How much will it cost for me to get the COVID-19 vaccination? Is the vaccine free?

A6: COVID-19 vaccines will be free for you. You do not need health insurance. If you have health insurance, vaccine providers may charge your insurance company an administration fee for giving you the vaccine. This means that you might be asked for your insurance information when you get the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccine providers cannot charge you for giving you a vaccine, but it is important that you bring your insurance information if you have health insurance.

Q7: I need help getting to a vaccine clinic. Can I be provided transportation to get vaccinated? How do I arrange for that?

A7: If you are an Oregon Health Plan member and need a ride to get a vaccine, rides are free. Find the OHP ride services in your area. You can also call your CCO plan.

If you are an older adult or an adult with a physical disability, there may also be other services in your community to assist with transportation. To learn more, contact the Aging and Disability Resource Connection of Oregon (ADRC) to see what community-based transportation and other services are available to assist you: 1-855-ORE-ADRC or https://www.adrcforegon.org/consumersite/index.php

If you receive in-home services through the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Office of Aging and People with Disabilities (APD), you may ask your Medicaid-funded in-home provider to take you to a clinic and to wait with you at the clinic.

Other local resources may also be available. Ask the ride service that you normally use for doctor's appointments if they are providing rides for vaccines.

Q8: Will I have to wait in line for a vaccine?

A8: Many vaccination sites and events will ask you to pre-register so that they can safely manage the flow of patients to avoid lines. Large vaccine sites are also working to make sure their sites are accessible for older adults and people with disabilities, particularly those who have mobility issues. But you also may have to wait. If waiting in a line will be difficult for you, you should let the vaccine site know that you may need an accommodation.

Q9: What if I get exposed to COVID-19 after my first dose?

A9: If you are exposed to COVID-19, you should follow the public health guidelines and stay home for 14 days even if you've gotten your first shot.

Q10: How long will I need to be observed after I am vaccinated? What if I have a history of allergies?

A10: Persons with a history of an immediate allergic reaction of any severity to a vaccine or injectable therapy and persons with a history of anaphylaxis due to any cause should be observed for 30 minutes. All other persons should be observed for
15 minutes. This means you need to wait where you got your shot so the vaccine provider can watch you to make sure you’re feeling okay.

**Q11: When should I get the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine? How will I remember?**

**A11:** Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine require two doses to promote a full immune response. The second dose of the Pfizer vaccine should be administered 21 days after the first dose, and the Moderna vaccine should be administered 28 days after the first dose. Individuals can enroll in VaxText, a CDC program that will send the patient a text when their next dose is due. Some vaccine providers may also send you a reminder.

**Q12: What if I have a bad reaction to my COVID-19 vaccination?**

**A12:** Safety is a top priority. The CDC and FDA encourage the public to report possible side effects (called adverse events) to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). This national system collects these data to look for adverse events that are unexpected, appear to happen more often than expected or have unusual patterns of occurrence. Learn about the difference between a vaccine side effect and an adverse event. Reports to VAERS help the CDC monitor the safety of vaccines.

**Q13: Who should I call if I have side effects: the vaccination site or my primary care provider?**

**A13:** If you have concerns about any side effects after you leave the vaccination site, you should contact your primary care provider. If it’s an emergency, you can go to an urgent care or emergency facility. You can also report your side effects to the CDC using the app vsafe.cdc.gov.

**Q14: I already received my first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Where should I get the second dose?**

**A14:** You should receive your second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the same location you received the first, unless otherwise directed by the vaccine provider.

**Q15: If I get my first dose of the vaccine in Oregon, can I get the second dose in another state?**

**A15:** We encourage you to get your second dose at the same location as the first. If you need to get vaccinated in another state, you must provide documentation of having received your first dose that shows which vaccine you were given. The vaccinator must document both doses in Oregon’s Immunization Information System (ALERT IIS).

**Q16: I have a caregiver who helps me with my health care needs and doctor appointments. Can they also get vaccinated if they come with me?**

**A16:** If your caregiver provides in-home services to you, they can also get vaccinated. Otherwise, your caregiver can get vaccinated if they fall under some
other eligibility criteria. You can go here to determine eligibility:
https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le3527A.pdf

Vaccine distribution in Oregon

Q1: Will OHA publish vaccination information on a regular basis, in the same manner that you publicly report the daily number of tests, new cases and deaths from COVID-19?

A1: Yes, OHA is reporting vaccine and vaccination data on the COVID-19 vaccine website. You can get the facts about COVID-19 vaccines and track Oregon’s progress at https://covidvaccine.oregon.gov.

Q2: Do COVID-19 vaccines need special storage?

A2: Many vaccines, like Moderna, require a standard cold chain involving either basic refrigeration or freezing. The J&J vaccine is stored in the refrigerator. The Pfizer vaccine requires a special ultra-cold chain using a specialized freezer that keeps vaccine at temperatures of -60 ° to -80 ° Celsius (-76° to -112° Fahrenheit). Oregon has a limited number of these freezers, though some hospitals and universities have them. The vaccine’s packaging can be filled with dry ice pellets, which may allow vaccine to be stored up to 30 days without the use of a specialized sub-zero freezer.

Q3: Are you buying more ultra-cold storage freezers?

A3: In early January, OHA received 15 small, portable ultra-low temperature storage units to increase storage of the Pfizer vaccine in non-hospital settings or in communities that don’t have the resources or need to buy their own unit. All units have been distributed and currently OHA is not planning to purchase more. We are looking at the total picture of vaccine distribution, including vaccines that do not require ultra-cold storage. We expect federal allocations of different vaccines to continue to change and are working with our partners to maintain flexibility in our distribution systems so that we ensure access to the COVID-19 vaccine throughout Oregon regardless of available products.

Q4: Who is responsible for making sure vaccines are distributed equitably and to those who qualify according to the state’s distribution plan?

A4: The distribution of vaccines in Oregon is managed by the Oregon Health Authority, in consultation with the Governor’s Office. The CDC advises OHA on weekly allocations available to Oregon. This is based on a pro-rata system including numbers of population in need by risk category. For Oregon, that is approximately 1.21 percent. OHA places orders with the CDC to ship directly to vaccine providers. Shipments are based on populations providers can serve and available refrigeration/freezer capacity. Vaccines are delivered directly to providers using the CDC’s contracted delivery organizations.
Vaccine is shipped from the manufacturers directly to the providers in Oregon. Providers can track their shipments through the Oregon ALERT IIS (Immunization Information System).

Q5: What is the protocol that vaccine administrators are required to follow once a vial is open and there are doses left over?

A5: Those who are delivering vaccines should deliver it to people currently eligible for the current phase of vaccine administration. Providers should plan ahead using their knowledge and experience of vaccine clinics to date. Depending on experience, clinic organizers should consider overbooking appointments based on typical no-show numbers. Some sites keep a call down list for eligible individuals who are willing to come in on very short notice for vaccine. If there are no eligible individuals available to be vaccinated, despite the best planning efforts of the vaccination site, providers should offer vaccinations in the proximity, to avoid wasting any vaccine.

Details about the vaccine

Q1: I’m pregnant. Can I get a COVID-19 vaccination?

A1: CDC doesn’t have any COVID-19 safety data on pregnant women, though animal and human studies are ongoing, and more are planned to begin in Jan. 2021. mRNA vaccines are not “live virus” vaccines. If a woman is part of a group (i.e., health care worker) recommended to get a COVID-19 vaccine and is pregnant, she may choose to get the vaccine in consultation with her medical provider’s help in making an informed decision. Things to consider:

- Level of COVID-19 in the community and the risk of transmission
- The personal risk of acquiring COVID-19 (occupation or other activities)
- The risk of COVID-19 to her or her fetus
- The efficacy of the vaccine
- The side effects of the vaccine
- The lack of data about the vaccine during pregnancy
- Women who take the vaccine and have fever as a side effect should take acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Routine testing for pregnancy before vaccination is not recommended

Q2: Are the vaccines interchangeable?

A2: No, the vaccines are not exactly the same. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are very similar. They are both effective and stop the virus in the same way, so people should take whichever is available to them. But your second dose must be from the same vaccine brand as your first dose.
The J&J vaccine is only one dose, so if you received it, you’re completely vaccinated and should not get a second dose of this or another vaccine.

Q3: Is the COVID-19 vaccine a live virus?
   A3: No, none of the three authorized COVID-19 vaccines are live virus.

Q4: Will the Pfizer vaccine remain at freezing temperatures when it is injected? Or will it be warmed up?
   A4: The vaccine will be diluted and stored in a refrigerator or at room temperature up to six hours before the vaccination.

Q5: What are the COVID-19 vaccine’s side effects?
   A5: According to the FDA, the most common side effects found in the COVID-19 vaccine trials included pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle pain and joint pain. After getting the COVID-19 vaccine, you will probably have a sore arm. You might have muscle aches, joint pain, tiredness, headache, chills, or maybe a fever. (Fever is less common.) This often means the vaccine is working to keep your body healthy. These are normal signs that your body is building protection. Sometimes these side effects may stop you from doing your normal activities for a couple days. Most of these side effects should go away in a few days.

Q6: Can a person receive the COVID-19 vaccine while they are sick?
   A6: Those with mild illness may receive the vaccines with no effect on vaccine safety or effectiveness. However, for those with COVID-19, please wait until the end of your isolation period, meaning either 10 days or longer depending on when you recover from your symptoms, before getting vaccines to keep from spreading your illness to health care workers who are administering the vaccine.

Q7: Are both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine the same amount? Is the second dose less or more than the first dose?
   A7: Both doses are the same amount for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine. A dose of the Pfizer vaccine is not the same as a dose of the Moderna vaccine.

Q8: Can I get other shots at the same time as my COVID-19 vaccine?
   A8: Just to be safe, the CDC recommends you wait for two weeks after getting other vaccines before getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Once you get your COVID-19 vaccine, you should wait for two weeks before getting other vaccines.

   Since many people will not be able to get COVID-19 vaccines right away, now is a perfect time to receive other vaccines that may be due, like a flu shot, tetanus shot or shingles vaccine.
Where can I go for more information?

- Go to https://covidvaccine.oregon.gov.
- Text ORCOVID to 898211 to get text/SMS updates (English and Spanish only).
- Email ORCOVID@211info.org.

If you can’t get your COVID-19 vaccine question answered on https://covidvaccine.oregon.gov, by text, or by email, call the call center at 211 or 1-866-698-6155. It is open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, including holidays.
- Wait times may be long due to high call volumes. There is an option to get a call back rather than wait on hold.
- English and Spanish are spoken at the call center. Free interpretation is available for all other languages.
- TTY: Dial 711 or call 1-866-698-6155.

Document accessibility: For individuals with disabilities or individuals who speak a language other than English, OHA can provide information in alternate formats such as translations, large print, or braille. Contact the Health Information Center at 1-844-882-7889, 711 TTY or COVID19.LanguageAccess@dhsoha.state.or.us.