

COVID-19 Vaccine Resource

Patient and Community Talking Points



The following messages can be used to help answer questions from patients and the community about the availability of the COVID-19 vaccination.

Commitment to caring

Duke Health's top priority is safety and protecting the health and well-being of our patients, their loved ones and our team members. We are committed to providing you with the facts so you can make an informed decision to receive a safe, effective COVID-19 vaccine. This is a rapidly evolving situation as more vaccines are authorized for use, and we are committed to keeping you informed with important updates.

Safety and efficacy

There are many strict protections in place and steps taken during development to ensure that any vaccine authorized for use is proven to be safe and effective.

Diversity in clinical trials

More than 70,000 people from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities participated in the COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials. Clinical trials for the three vaccines included White, Hispanic/Latino, Black, Asian, and other races/ethnicities.

Ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines

Unfortunately, there are verifiably false rumors about the ingredients of these vaccines spreading. These falsehoods include that the vaccines contain a mind-control device, microchip tracking device or cells that originated from aborted fetal tissue. Unquestionably, these are all false.

Both the [Pfizer-BionNTech](#) vaccine and the [Moderna](#) vaccine use mRNA to give the cells in your body the instructions to make a protein that safely teaches your body how to make an antibody to fight the real COVID-19. Your body destroys the mRNA and gets rid of it. It doesn't stay nor does it alter any DNA in your body. The only other ingredients in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are salt, sugar and fat.

The [J&J](#) vaccine uses a harmless inactivated cold virus as the carrier for the genetic material that codes for a piece of the “spike protein” of COVID-19 to help the body build an immune response against the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. These types of vaccines are generally safe for large populations of people.

A live virus is not included in any of the vaccines. These vaccines do not contain eggs, preservatives, fetal tissue, stem cells, mercury or latex.

Side effects and adverse reactions

Experiencing some side effects after getting a COVID-19 vaccine is common and is a normal sign that your immune system is building protection. Some people report having more intense side effects after their second dose of vaccine.

Common potential side effects include injection site reactions (redness, swelling and pain at the site of the shot), fever, fatigue, headache, chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain and/or joint pain. These are side effects that may also be seen after receiving other vaccines. If you experience any side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine, it is still necessary to receive the second dose for the vaccine to be fully effective.

Allergies

If you have allergies to injectable medicines, antibiotics, pets, environmental substances or foods, you can receive the vaccine. People who have egg allergies may be concerned because some vaccines for flu, measles and other diseases contain a small amount of egg protein. The three COVID-19 vaccines on the market do not contain egg protein.

The CDC recommends that people not receive the second dose if they had a severe allergic reaction following the first dose. The incidence of this occurring is low, about one in six per million doses. If someone has an anaphylactic reaction, they should not get the second dose. If you have questions about allergies talk to your doctor, who will help you conduct a risk assessment to determine if the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the risks.

Fertility

There is no evidence to suggest the vaccines cause infertility or affect your ability to become pregnant. A rumor on the Internet claims a protein created by the body after vaccination is similar to a protein that is needed for placental formation. This is not true. The proteins are not similar, nor do they impact fertility or affect a pregnancy. All vaccine manufacturers are monitoring people in the clinical trials who later became pregnant.

Pregnancy

The approved COVID-19 vaccines have not been studied in pregnancy. We know that pregnant people are at an increased risk for complications from COVID-19. That's why we encourage all pregnant people to ask questions and discuss their concerns with their care providers. Duke Health will continue to offer pregnant people the option to get vaccinated in accordance with NC DHHS guidelines for vaccine distribution.

Breastfeeding

The approved COVID-19 vaccines have not been studied in people who are breastfeeding at this time. However, there is no data that suggests that mRNA vaccines would be a risk to infants that are breastfeeding ([CDC](#)). We encourage everyone who is breastfeeding to ask questions and discuss their concerns with their care providers. Duke Health will offer breastfeeding people the option to get vaccinated accordance with NC DHHS guidelines for vaccine distribution.

Cancer

The COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for people who are actively being treated for cancer. In fact, people with cancer are more susceptible to serious COVID-19 illness.

Because cancer patients in active treatment were not part of the clinical trials, the vaccine's effectiveness in this patient population is still unknown. Patients with cancer are encouraged to talk to their doctor to schedule the vaccine so that it coincides with their treatment. It's very important that caregivers and people who surround these and other cancer patients are vaccinated so they can protect their sick loved ones.

[Equitable and efficient distribution](#)

In close coordination with CDC, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) and local health departments, we are efficiently and equitably distributing the vaccine. In partnership with the state, we are working to help ensure that all North Carolinians have equitable access to vaccines, and vaccine planning and distribution is inclusive. The vaccine will be available to all who want it, but supplies will be limited at first.

At this time, the vaccine has not been fully studied in children and is not yet approved for people younger than 16 years old. We will update you as data on COVID-19 vaccines in children become available.

[Available vaccine selection](#)

At this point, people are unable to choose which vaccine they will receive because the supply is limited. The vaccine we have on hand is the one that will be administered. All of the authorized vaccines have gone through rigorous clinical trials and have been thoroughly tested to demonstrate that they are safe and effective. We encourage everyone to get the vaccine you have access to as soon as you can.

Distribution prioritization

A vaccine will be available to all who want it, but supplies will be limited at first. Duke Health is following NC DHHS guidelines for COVID-19 vaccination distribution. Independent state and federal public health advisory groups have determined that the best way to fight the spread of COVID-19 is to start with vaccinating those most at-risk for severe illness, and then expand access to vaccination to more people as the supply increases throughout 2021. Be assured, the COVID-19 vaccine will be available at the appropriate time for all who want it at no cost regardless of whether you have health insurance.

You can learn more about where you fit in the state's COVID-19 vaccine distribution timeline [here](#).

Distribution group updates

Administering this safe and effective vaccine is an important step toward ending this pandemic. North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) has released an updated phased distribution plan. There are five total distribution groups. Currently, Groups 1, 2 and 3 are actively receiving vaccinations.

There are many individuals in these groups, and the supply of vaccine is limited. You do not need to be a Duke Health patient to receive the vaccine. If you have a Duke MyChart account, you may check your account often to schedule an appointment. If an appointment is not available, you can visit DukeHealth.org to join our waitlist. Our team will contact everyone on this waitlist on a first-come, first-served basis to schedule an appointment.

You can also call the Duke COVID-19 hotline: 919-385-0429 to make an appointment. If an appointment is unavailable, you can call the hotline to be added to the waitlist. The hotline is open every day from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. Please note that we are experiencing exceptionally high call volumes and extended wait times.

We are committed to equitably distributing vaccines to our patients, community and members of historically underserved populations. As individuals in these groups express interest in vaccination, we will place them in a queue and schedule appointments by the order in which their request was received. In accordance with the state's distribution plan, no other prioritization will occur to ensure equitable distribution.

Eligibility notification

We encourage you to register for a MyChart account if you have not already for convenient communication with the Duke Health team. Visit dukemychart.org to register for your account. More information about COVID-19 vaccines and our vaccine distribution plan may be found on our website, DukeHealth.org.

Vaccination process

The development and distribution of safe COVID-19 vaccines is an exciting milestone to help us end the pandemic and return to the places and people we love. Both the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna vaccines require two doses. The J&J vaccine only requires one dose. After receiving either of these vaccines, you will need to wait under observation for a short period of time. When you come for your vaccination, you will get a printed card that says which vaccine you received. If you received the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine or the Moderna vaccine, you will schedule a follow-up appointment for your second dose 3-4 weeks later.

One more way to stay safe

Safe, tested and effective – the COVID-19 vaccine is one more way to stay healthy. "One More Way" is Duke Health's campaign to encourage everyone to do what they can to prevent the spread of infection, regardless of where they fall in the distribution plan, to help keep themselves and others safe. We understand that some people may have hesitations about getting vaccinated for COVID-19 and supplies are currently limited, and we know that stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools we have available. Getting vaccinated and following other simple healthy behaviors like wearing a mask and washing your hands is the best way to stay healthy.

Remain vigilant

Continue to practice the 3 Ws. Wear a mask. Wait 6 feet apart. Wash your hands. These are small steps that make a big difference to fight this disease until the vaccine is more widely available.

Thank you

We appreciate your understanding, and we want to ensure you that the safety of everyone is our top priority. Especially during these challenging times, thank you for your commitment to preventing the spread of infection in our community.