

What is a vaccine?

Vaccines expose the body to fragments of a virus so the body's immune system is trained to produce protective antibodies much like it would if you were exposed to the disease. Vaccines, though, only use small pieces of the virus or otherwise stimulate our bodies to produce small pieces of the virus that produce protective antibodies but are incapable of causing infection. After getting vaccinated, you develop immunity to that disease without actually getting sick with the disease itself.

This is what makes vaccines such powerful medicine. Unlike most medicines, which treat or cure diseases, vaccines prevent them.

Can mRNA vaccines change the DNA of a person?

No, mRNA is active only in a cell's cytoplasm and DNA is located in the nucleus; mRNA vaccines do not operate in the same cellular compartment that DNA is located and therefore are not able to change DNA.

Are we going to be required to take the COVID-19 vaccine?

There is no state or federal government requirement for any person to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

What is Kentucky's plan for distributing the vaccine?

National and state COVID-19 vaccine deployment is rapidly evolving and expanding. As is the case in all other states, Kentucky is distributing the COVID-19 vaccine in phases with a focus on reaching the most vulnerable members of society as quickly as possible. Also, to reach the most people possible as quickly as possible, Kentucky has instructed all vaccine administration sites to administer at least 90% of all vaccines they receive within 7 days of arrival in Kentucky. Kentucky is committed to making the vaccine available to all willing Kentuckians as quickly as quickly and efficiently as vaccine quantities allow. The kycovid19.ky.gov website provides the most up-to-date information related to vaccines, Kentucky's distribution plan, and the vaccine phases.

When can I get vaccinated?

Because the supply of COVID-19 vaccine in the United States is expected to be limited at first, CDC recommends efforts are made to provide early doses of COVID-19 vaccine to health care personnel and long-term care facility residents. CDC made this recommendation on December 3, 2020, and based it on recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), an independent panel of medical and public health experts. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccination as soon as large quantities of vaccine are available. As vaccine supply increases but remains limited, ACIP will expand the groups recommended for vaccination. We hope to get everyone vaccinated as quickly as possible.

I'm a health care personnel / dental worker. Who do I contact to get my vaccine?

In Kentucky, all health care personnel working in clinical settings (i.e. places where patient care occurs), regardless of occupational role, are eligible for phase 1a immunization. We are currently working to create a network of identified vaccination sites for health care personnel. At kycovid19.ky.gov, under the health care/lab tab, you can find a map showing the initial sites identified for this service. As more vaccine becomes available and this process quickly evolves, more locations will become available. Additionally, in many communities, local health departments and hospitals are doing targeted outreach to health care personnel to assist in vaccinating them; please check directly the website of your local health department or hospital to see if this is an option for you.

I am a home health care worker. Why we are not addressed in Phase 1 along with the other healthcare workers?

Home-based health care workers are in phase 1a. In Kentucky, all health care personnel working in clinical settings (i.e. places where patient care occurs), regardless of occupational role, are eligible for phase 1a immunization. We are currently working to create a network of identified vaccination sites for health care personnel. At kycovid19.ky.gov, under the health care/lab tab, you can find a map showing the initial sites identified for this service. As more vaccine becomes available and this process quickly evolves, more locations will become available. Additionally, in many communities, local health departments and hospitals are doing targeted outreach to health care personnel to assist in vaccinating them; please check directly the website of your local health department or hospital to see if this is an option for you.

How will residents be notified when it is their turn to receive the vaccine?

We are currently in Phase 1a of the Vaccine Distribution Plan. Health care personnel and long-term care facilities may be notified by their employer or the agency providing the vaccine of a date, time, and location. As vaccines become more available, KDPH/Team Kentucky will communicate when and where vaccines are available on kycovid19.ky.gov, during press conferences, and by press release. We understand many Kentuckians are eager to get vaccinated as quickly as possible and are working to quickly build an information and delivery network to make it possible for Kentuckians to communicate their interest, sign up, and have confidence they will have access as soon as vaccine quantities make it possible.

Do residents need to make an appointment?

As vaccines become more available, KDPH/Team Kentucky will communicate when and where vaccines are available on kycovid19.ky.gov, during press conferences, and by press release. We understand many Kentuckians are eager to get vaccinated as quickly as possible and are working to quickly build an information and delivery network to make it possible for Kentuckians to communicate their interest, sign up, and have confidence they will have access as soon as vaccine quantities make it possible. Appointments will be recommended to assure people have the time needed ask questions and be monitored for safety during the 15 minutes required after vaccination is provided.

I'm over 70. Who do I contact to get my vaccine?

We are currently in Phase 1a of the Vaccine Distribution Plan. As vaccines become more available, KDPH/Team Kentucky will communicate when and where vaccines are available to the general public on [kycovid19.ky.gov](https://www.ky.gov/covid19), during press conferences, and by press release.

Vaccine location by phase will also be shared by local health departments and by vaccine providers.

We understand many Kentuckians are eager to get vaccinated as quickly as possible and are working to quickly build an information and delivery network to make it possible for Kentuckians to communicate their interest, sign up, and have confidence they will have access as soon as vaccine quantities make it possible.

We appreciate everyone's patience as we work diligently to ensure all Kentuckians receive a vaccine as quickly as possible.

If it is not my turn to get the vaccine, will I be turned away at vaccination sites?

All Kentuckians are asked to check the current vaccine administration phase currently targeted as shown on [kycovid19.ky.gov](https://www.ky.gov/covid19) and to exercise their kindness and care for others by following the phases so those most at risk for severe COVID-19 have access to the vaccine as quickly as possible.

Vaccine administration sites will do their best to follow the phasing schedule. At times, persons from later phases may be vaccinated earlier than anticipated as sites strive to administer at least 90% of the vaccine they receive within 7 days of receiving it.

But, yes, if a person has clearly violated the current vaccination phase and it is not yet their time, they may be turned away from scheduling themselves for vaccination until the phase for which they are eligible is reached.

I am a caregiver for my elderly parents. Both parents have underlying health issues. Can I get the vaccine early to help protect my parents?

The Kentucky Department for Public Health understands everyone's desire to get a vaccine. Kentucky's distribution plan was created with careful consideration for the safety and health of all Kentuckians. Each individual should be vaccinated in the phase in which they belong. We appreciate everyone's kindness and caring for each other as well as patience as we work diligently to ensure all Kentuckians receive a vaccine as quickly as possible.

How can I get my business on the list to get vaccinated?

There is no list to sign up business or companies for vaccination. Each individual will become eligible when their phase arises and then be able to seek vaccination at vaccine administration sites that will increase in number and distribution as more vaccine becomes available. Team Kentucky will share information as this network expands via [kycovid19.ky.gov](https://www.ky.gov/covid19), during press conferences, and by press release. We understand many Kentuckians are eager to get vaccinated as quickly as possible and are working to quickly build an information and delivery network to make it possible for Kentuckians to communicate their interest, sign up, and have confidence they will have access as soon as vaccine quantities make it possible.

When we are able to be vaccinated, can my children get it?

No, not if your children are under the age of 16. The COVID-19 vaccines are not currently authorized by the United States Food and Drug Administration to be used in any person under the age of 16.

Additionally, healthy children, adolescents, and young adults are at the lowest risk of severe COVID-19 disease and are therefore placed in later phases of vaccine deployment. Healthy persons under the age of 40 are not likely to have access to COVID-19 vaccination until at least the summer of 2021. Learn more about Kentucky's vaccine phases [here](#).

Supplemental Responses:

Pfizer: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to permit the emergency use of the unapproved product, Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, for active immunization to prevent COVID-19 in individuals 16 years of age and older.

Moderna: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to permit the emergency use of the unapproved product, MODERNA COVID-19 VACCINE, for active immunization to prevent COVID-19 in individuals 18 years of age and older.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines being studied to use on children?

Yes. Studies of COVID-19 vaccines in children have started. The Pfizer mRNA vaccine was tested in some 16- to 18-year olds and has been approved for teens in this age group. As more information becomes available in younger children and teens, the age-related recommendations will be adjusted.

It is important that COVID-19 vaccines are thoroughly tested in children and adolescents younger than 18 years to ensure safety in this younger population whose bodies are still rapidly developing and therefore differ from fully matured adults. This is a normal part of the vaccine development process and most vaccines are tested with adults first.

Will children be allowed to attend school if those in the household have not received the vaccine?

The Kentucky Department for Public Health in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Education will collaborate to determine and communicate recommendations for school-related vaccines. There is no federal or state requirement to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and this is unlikely to change. There is also no recommendation or guidance that would prevent children from attending school if others in their household are not vaccinated.

Will there be enough vaccine for everyone?

Initially, no. The newly approved vaccines are very limited in quantity at the start. National efforts are underway to rapidly expand the supply of vaccines, however, and the goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine as larger quantities are available. As vaccine quantities increase, hundreds of vaccination providers will become available.

How many Kentucky residents are in each phase?

It is very difficult to answer this question accurately. People frequently do not fit into nicely described 'boxes.' In general terms, though, we anticipate the following timelines:

Phase 1a: December 2020 – Winter 2021
Phase 1b: January 2021 – Spring 2021
Phase 1c: Spring 2021 – Summer 2021
Phase 2: Late Summer 2021 – Winter 2021
Phase 3: Fall 2021 – Winter 2021
Phase 4: Currently not eligible for vaccination per FDA

How will residents show they have been vaccinated?

Vaccinated individuals will receive a vaccination record card or printout that documents which COVID-19 vaccine they received and the date they received it. Vaccination providers will also keep a record of vaccination in the providers' Electronic Health Records (EHR) and/or in the Kentucky Immunization Registry.

Can residents travel by plane if they haven't received the vaccine once it is publicly available?

There are no current requirements to be vaccinated to engage in air travel or any other specified activity.

Current COVID-19 travel restrictions and guidance are unrelated to vaccination status and vary by location and mode of travel (e.g., plane, train, bus, etc.) If you are planning on traveling in the near future, you should refer to the airline or other relevant entity's policies to ensure that you have understand current guidance and requirements.

Do you have to be a resident of Kentucky to receive the vaccine?

All vaccine sites are open to anyone in the priority groups regardless of state or county residency. Residents will need to return to the same sites receive their second shot 21 or 28 days after their first dose, depending on which vaccine they receive.

How much does the vaccine cost?

Vaccine purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. Your insurance may be billed for an office visit or administration fee for administration of the vaccine; however, you cannot be turned away from receiving the vaccine due to lack of payment.

Do you need to have insurance to get the vaccine? If you don't, how much will the vaccine cost per dose?

Vaccine purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. Your insurance may be billed for an office visit or administration fee, but you cannot be turned away from receiving the vaccine due to lack of insurance or payment.

Is the vaccine safe?

Safety is a top priority. COVID-19 vaccines are held to the same standards as other vaccines to make sure they are safe. For all vaccines in the United States, there is an extensive development and approval

process and no safety steps were skipped during the development of these vaccines. Additionally, active monitoring continues, as is the case for all immunizations, to ensure ongoing safety.

What steps are taken to ensure safety after a vaccine is approved?

After a vaccine is approved and distributed, vaccine monitoring systems are used to watch for possible side effects. If an unexpected side effect is seen, experts study it to determine whether changes are needed in vaccine recommendations. The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) is a national vaccine safety surveillance program of the FDA and CDC. VAERS collects and analyzes information from reports of adverse events (e.g., side effects) that occur after a vaccine has been approved and distributed. Anyone can submit a report to VAERS by going to this link: <https://vaers.hhs.gov/reportevent.html>

There is also a new smartphone app being introduced for the COVID-19 vaccines. **V-safe** is a smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after you receive a COVID-19 vaccination. Through **v-safe**, you can quickly tell CDC if you have any side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Depending on your answers, someone from CDC may call to check on you and get more information. And **v-safe** will remind you to get your second COVID-19 vaccine dose. To learn more: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/vsafe.html>

Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No, it is not possible to get COVID-19 from vaccines. To trigger an immune response, some vaccines put a weakened or inactivated germ into our bodies. Not mRNA vaccines. Instead, they teach our cells how to make a protein—or even just a piece of a protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from being infected if the real virus enters our bodies.

Will COVID-19 vaccines cause me to test positive on COVID-19 tests?

No. These vaccines will not cause you to test positive on viral tests.

Should I get the vaccine if I am pregnant or currently breastfeeding?

There are currently no data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in lactating women or the effects of mRNA vaccines on the breastfed infant or milk production / excretion. mRNA vaccines are not considered live virus vaccines and are not thought to be a risk to the breastfeeding infant. If a lactating woman is part of a group (e.g., healthcare personnel) who is recommended to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, she may choose to be vaccinated. However, we recommend you seek guidance from your healthcare provider regarding your specific medical situation.

If I already had COVID-19 and recovered, will I still need a vaccine?

Vaccination should be offered to persons regardless of history of prior symptomatic or asymptomatic COVID-19 infection.

Vaccination of persons with known current COVID-19 infection should be deferred until the person has recovered from the acute illness (if the person had symptoms) and criteria have been met for them to discontinue isolation.

Additionally, while there is no recommended minimum interval between infection and vaccination, current evidence suggests that reinfection is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. Thus, persons with documented acute COVID-19 infection in the preceding 90 days may delay vaccination until near the end of this period, if desired.

NOTE: For those persons who previously received passive antibody therapy (e.g., Regeneron, Eli Lilly antibody therapy, monoclonal antibodies) for COVID-19: Vaccination should be deferred for at least 90 days.

How long will vaccine immunity last?

We do not yet know how long immunity lasts after infection or vaccination:

- **Infection** - Scientists are working to learn more about immunity following infection. While some people have been re-infected after recovering from COVID-19, the number of people who have experienced this is very small compared to the total number of people who have been infected. Likewise, although the virus has been changing since it was first recognized, antibodies from people who were sick early during the pandemic are still effective against the slightly modified version. For these reasons, scientists are hopeful that people will be protected for one or more years.
- **Vaccination** - Clinical trial participants will be monitored to understand how long immunity lasts after vaccination.

Will I still have to wear a mask and social distance after I've received both doses of the vaccine?

Yes. While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to us to help stop this pandemic, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others.

It is clear the vaccines prevent serious illness, but we don't know yet if they will prevent vaccinated people from picking up the virus and spreading it to others. 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.

Once I have been vaccinated, can I ignore any lockdown restrictions?

Everyone will still need to practice recommended public health measures for a while because it will take time to slow or stop the spread of the virus. The vaccines have a high efficacy rate around 95%, but they do not have a 100% efficacy. Two other factors are important for understanding why:

- While the vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe disease, it might not prevent asymptomatic infection, meaning vaccine recipients might still be able to be infected, but not have symptoms and, therefore, unknowingly spread the virus. The vaccine manufacturers are conducting additional studies to clarify.
- Scientists estimate that to control COVID-19, about 7 or 8 of every 10 people will need to be immune. Given that the U.S. population is more than 330 million people, this means that almost 250 million of them will need to be immune to reach this goal. Between March and November 2020, almost 12 million people in the U.S. were found to be infected, although estimates from antibody studies suggest that the number might be 3-7 times greater. This reflects how important vaccines are in controlling the spread because more than 250,000 people died as a result of COVID-19 infections between March and November 2020.

Therefore, important safety measure such as masks, social distancing, and other public health measures, will still be necessary to slow or stop the spread of the virus. And, because we won't know who might still be able to be infected after vaccination or previous illness, everyone will be asked to comply.

How many doses of COVID-19 vaccine will be needed?

The mRNA vaccines require two doses. For the Pfizer vaccine, doses should be separated by 3 weeks. For Moderna's vaccine, doses should be separated by 28 days. The two mRNA vaccines are not interchangeable per the United States Food and Drug Administration. A person should be sure they know which one they received for the first dose and be clear about when they should return for the second dose, particularly because the vaccines require both doses to have maximum protection.

What if I miss my second dose?

It is important that you receive your second dose. The COVID-19 vaccines that require two doses are not completely effective unless you receive the second dose. You should ask to schedule your second dose at the time you receive your initial dose. If you miss your second dose, reach out to the provider for recommendation of next steps.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine be an annual shot?

We don't know yet. Scientists are still studying this and will determine this once the vaccine is distributed and more data becomes available.

How many people need to receive the vaccine before we achieve herd immunity?

Experts estimate at least 70 – 80% of Americans would need to get vaccinated to achieve herd immunity to COVID-19. Herd immunity is a term used to describe when enough people have protection—either from previous infection or vaccination—that it is unlikely that a virus or bacteria can effectively spread and cause disease. As a result, everyone within the community is protected even if some people don't have any protection themselves. The percentage of people who need to have protection in order to achieve herd immunity varies by disease.

When will the general population have access to the vaccine?

It is difficult to answer this question accurately. People frequently do not fit into nicely described 'boxes.' In general terms, though, we anticipate the following timelines:

Phase 1a: December 2020 – Winter 2021

Phase 1b: January 2021 – Spring 2021

Phase 1c: Spring 2021 – Summer 2021

Phase 2: Late Summer 2021 – Winter 2021

Phase 3: Fall 2021 – Winter 2021

Phase 4: Currently not eligible for vaccination per FDA

The [kycovid19.ky.gov](https://www.ky.gov/covid19) website provides the most up-to-date information related to vaccines, Kentucky's distribution plan, and the vaccine phases.

What are the side effects?

The side effects will vary slightly from person to person and depending on which vaccine you receive. Most reported side effects are consistent with other vaccines. For example, vaccine injections may cause mild flu-like side effects — including soreness at the injection site, headaches, muscle aches and fever.

These symptoms do not mean you have been infected with COVID-19, but they do indicate your immune system has begun working to make the cells and proteins necessary to protect you from severe illness if you are exposed to COVID.

What if I am concerned about my side effects?

If you experience severe side effects, please seek medical attention immediately. If you would like to report your side effects to the federal reporting system please visit: <https://vaers.hhs.gov/reportevent.html>

If I have an autoimmune or immune-compromising condition, can I be vaccinated?

People with immune-compromising conditions may get the COVID-19 vaccine as long as they are not in one of the following categories:

- Severe allergy to a vaccine component (i.e., one that causes anaphylaxis or requires medical intervention)
- History of severe allergy to any vaccine or injectable medication

However, it is recommended that individuals with compromised immune systems discuss their personal risks and benefits with a health care provider to determine whether to receive the vaccine. Data about how well the vaccine works and its safety in immune-compromised individuals are not currently available, so it is possible that these individuals could have a lower immune response to vaccination. On the other hand, persons with these conditions may also be at higher risk of severe disease due to COVID-19. Therefore, the CDC recommended that people who are immune-compromised or taking immunosuppressive medications could receive the vaccine if they wanted as long as they do not have other contraindications.

If someone with an immune-compromising condition decides to get vaccinated, it will be particularly important for them to receive both doses and practice other public health measures until more is known about their protection against COVID-19. Post-licensure monitoring systems, like the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS) and the Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD), will allow for real-time monitoring of these sub-groups.

Will I be able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other vaccines?

If possible, people should separate their COVID-19 vaccinations by at least 14 days from any other vaccine (before or after). This recommendation is based on the fact that we currently do not have data regarding whether the COVID-19 vaccines will affect, or be affected by, other vaccines.

Studies to determine whether COVID-19 vaccines can be given with the flu vaccine or the shingles vaccine will be completed; these types of studies are called “concomitant use studies.”

If I cannot take a flu shot due to an egg allergy, can I receive the Covid-19 vaccine (either Pfizer or Moderna)?

Both brands (Pfizer and Moderna) are cell-based vaccines (RNA). Therefore, they do not contain any human or animal cells in their development. Since they aren’t grown in eggs like some flu vaccines, you should be safe.

However, if you have experienced an allergic reaction to any prior vaccine or injectable medication other than a rash, you should discuss it your health care provider first and receive the vaccine in a setting that is prepared for medical intervention (doctor’s office, etc.).

Were steps skipped to provide these vaccines faster?

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines were developed quicker than has ever been done in the past, the speed did not decrease safety. The steps that were shortened were accomplished by the federal government removing financial risk from vaccine manufacturers so they could proceed with multiple steps at the same time instead of doing them one at a time.

Do the COVID-19 vaccines contain a microchip?

COVID-19 vaccines do not contain microchips. This idea is based on a false narrative and misinformation campaign waged online.

Recipient Fact Sheets

Moderna: <https://www.modernatx.com/covid19vaccine-eua/eua-fact-sheet-recipients.pdf>

Pfizer: <https://selfservehosteu.pfizer.com/pfrrdownload/file/fid/77411>