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**COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions**

*Updated as of January 13, 2021*

Californians have made extraordinary sacrifices to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Help is on the way as the State begins its rollout of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. California's vaccine efforts are led by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). These FAQs provide general information about the vaccine and will be updated as additional information becomes available.

**Has California received COVID-19 vaccines?**

Yes. California has started to receive shipments of COVID-19 vaccines made by PfizerBioNTech and Moderna. The federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is reviewing additional potential vaccines for possible approval.

**What information is available about the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines?**

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has received authorization for use on people 16 years and older. There are two doses given 21 days apart. It is 95 percent effective against COVID-19 one week after the second dose. The Moderna vaccine has received authorization for use on people 18 years and older. There are two doses given 28 days apart. It is 94 percent effective against COVID-19 two weeks after the second dose.

**What are the benefits of being vaccinated?**

COVID-19 vaccines are meant to prevent you from getting COVID-19. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that getting a COVID-19 vaccine also may help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19.

**Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?**

No. The currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines do not contain live COVID-19 virus. The vaccines therefore cannot make you sick with COVID-19. The goal of the vaccines is to teach our immune systems how to fight the virus that causes COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines also will not cause you to test positive on COVID-19 viral tests, which are used to see if you have a current COVID-19 infection.

**Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?**

Yes. The vaccines have received an emergency authorization use from the FDA. In addition, California has its own Scientific Safety Review Workgroup. The expert members of this Workgroup have confirmed that the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines have met high standards for safety and efficacy.

Additional information about vaccine safety may be found on the CDC's website:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html>

**“Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices”**

## **Do the vaccines have any side effects?**

Any vaccine sometimes can cause a sore arm, aches, fatigue or fever for a few days after getting the vaccine, but these temporary effects are not harmful. However, the CDC indicates that some individuals should not receive the vaccine. You may find more information about the CDC guidance here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/vaccines/safety/allergic-reaction.html>

If you any questions or concerns about side effects, allergic reactions, and/or other questions, please discuss them with your health care provider before receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

## **Who will be vaccinated first?**

In early December 2020, CDPH issued its initial vaccine distribution plan. California's Vaccine Plan breaks the distribution of the vaccine into three phases: Phase 1a, 1b, and 1c. There are tiers within each phase, as explained below. These Phase guidelines may be found here:

- <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines>
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/CDPHAllocation-Guidelines-for-COVID-19-Vaccine-During-Phase-1ARecommendations.aspx>

The priorities for vaccines in Phase 1a are:

1. Healthcare workers and long-term care staff who are most likely to be exposed to COVID-19 through direct or indirect contact with patients or residents; and
2. Residents of long-term care settings because they are more likely to be hospitalized or die from COVID-19.

Health care and long-term care facilities include: acute care, psychiatric and correctional facility hospitals and skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, and similar settings for older or medically vulnerable individuals. Regional center consumers who live in licensed long-term care facilities and the staff who have direct or indirect contact with residents of those facilities are in the first priority, Phase 1a, vaccination group. This includes individuals living in Skilled Nursing Facilities, Intermediate Care Facilities, Adult Residential Facilities for Persons with Special Health Care Needs (ARFPSHN) and other licensed residential facilities.

In making decisions about the guidelines for Phase 1b and 1c, CDPH is consulting with a group of experts, the Drafting Guidelines Workgroup, and a group of community representatives, the Community Vaccine Advisory Committee, to make sure vaccines are prioritized fairly. After healthcare workers and long-term care residents, the next people to be vaccinated will be individuals who have higher risk for severe disease or death (due to age or other factors), who are unable to work at home, who live or work in geographic areas that have been highly impacted, or who are most likely to spread disease to other workers or to the public. Later in 2021, most Californians will have an opportunity to get vaccinated. More information about the priorities for vaccine administration may be found here:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID19Vaccine.aspx>

### **When can I be vaccinated?**

California is working closely with community partners and stakeholders to help guide the planning process and ensure the vaccine is distributed and administered equitably. California is committed to a fair and equitable allocation and distribution process. No one should bypass the established vaccine allocation and distribution process. County health departments are responsible for administering the COVID-19 vaccine consistent with the State's priorities. Because the number of health care providers and the number of long-term care facilities will vary from county, the timing for vaccination administration in each county also may vary. Regional centers are working with county health officials about local plans to vaccinate consumers and staff who live or work in long-term care facilities. If you have questions about those plans, please contact your regional center.

### **When can providers serving regional center consumers receive the vaccine?**

Many providers who work in long-term care facilities will be covered in Phase 1a of the vaccine administration. Tier 1 of this phase includes: acute care, psychiatric hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, and similar settings for older or medically vulnerable individuals. As noted above, included in the category of "long-term care facilities" are residential facilities serving regional center consumers, including: ARFPSHN, Enhanced Behavioral Supports Homes, and other licensed residential facilities.

Phase 1a, Tier 2 for vaccine administration includes staff and residents of the following:

- Intermediate care facilities for persons who need non-continuous nursing supervision and supportive care and other licensed adult residential facilities.

Phase 1a, Tier 2 for vaccine administration also includes the following community health workers:

- Home health care and in-home supportive services
- Community health workers, including promotoras
- Supported living services
- Family Home Agencies and contractors
- Congregate Living Health Facilities
- Individuals providing in-home services such as respite workers, applied behavioral analysis providers, staff providing independent living skills training, and staff providing Early Start services

### **Are staff who work through a supported living service provider eligible for vaccination?**

Yes, staff who work through a supported living services provider are included as community health care workers.

### **Will any regional center staff receive vaccines during this phase?**

Regional center staff who have direct contact with consumers and families and provide the following services: monitoring and quality assurance, intake and assessment, service coordination, bilingual coordination, and clinical staff will receive the vaccine during Phase 1a, Tier 2. Each regional center will identify eligible staff.

**Will any family member caregivers of regional center consumers be eligible to receive the vaccines during this phase?**

Family members who care for regional center consumers at high risk of COVID-19 complications and related fatalities including the following conditions: cerebral palsy, down syndrome, epilepsy, and individuals who have specialized health care needs, including dependence upon ventilators, oxygen, and other technology. This list is not necessarily exhaustive.

**Is the vaccine mandatory?**

No, there is no mandatory vaccination requirement from either the state or federal government. While vaccine doses will be limited in supply at first, we hope that by educating Californians about the safety and efficacy of a COVID-19 vaccine, we can encourage voluntary adoption of the vaccine.

**Is consent required to receive the vaccine?**

Yes, consent is required to receive the vaccine.

**Who can give consent for regional center consumers?**

Consent for regional center consumers is given by the individual who can make medical decisions. This may include:

- An adult regional center consumer. Most consumers have the right and ability to make their own decisions about medical care. Consumers should be provided with needed disability-related accommodations. The consumer may ask for help from a family member or other individual they trust. This is sometimes called supported decision making. Under state law (Welfare & Institutions Code §4541(a)(1-3)), the State Council on Developmental Disabilities may, if the consumer requests, appoint an authorized representative to help the individual make decisions. A request for an authorized representative can be made through [council@scdd.ca.gov](mailto:council@scdd.ca.gov).
- Parents or legal guardians of minor children.
- Individuals authorized to make decisions under a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare.
- Conservators of adults, if the court's conservatorship order gives the conservator the right to make medical treatment decisions.
- In limited circumstances, a regional center executive director or designee when the consumer does not have the capacity to consent and there is not another person authorized to make decisions.

**Is there a cost to receive the vaccine?**

Vaccines are available at no cost. Vaccines purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost.

**After I receive the vaccine, do I need to wear a mask and follow other safety protocols?**

Yes. Vaccinated individuals should keep wearing masks, washing hands and maintaining social distancing of six feet from other people until the vaccine has been widely administered.

**How is my privacy protected if I receive a vaccine?**

California law strictly limits how personal information about those who are vaccinated can be shared. California negotiated with the federal government to limit the required data sharing only to information that will not allow an individual to be identified.

**Where can I find other information about the COVID-19 Vaccine?**

CDPH is leading California's vaccine efforts. Information about vaccines may be found on CDPH's website:

- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID19Vaccine.aspx>
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/CDPHAllocation-Guidelines-for-COVID-19-Vaccine-During-Phase-1A-Recommendations.aspx>

The CDC is coordinating federal information about the vaccine. Information about vaccines may be found on CDC's website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

**Will the Department of Developmental Services provide additional information regarding vaccinations?**

Yes, as more information is available, the Department will update these FAQs on our website, at this link: <https://www.dds.ca.gov/corona-virus-information-andresources/frequently-asked-questions/>