



Frequently Asked Questions: COVID-19 Vaccine

Updated **June 1, 2021**: Information is still evolving rapidly and BPHC will update this information as new and relevant information becomes available.

VACCINE AVAILABILITY

1. How many vaccines are available in Massachusetts?

Three vaccines are available to the public in Massachusetts.

2. Where can I go to get the vaccine?

3. How old do you need to be to become vaccinated?

As of May 10, 2021 anyone age 12 and older is eligible to be vaccinated.

4. Will I have to pay for the vaccine?

No. The vaccine is being provided free of charge to all individuals, including those with no insurance, undocumented immigrants, and international students.

VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

5. How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

The first available COVID-19 vaccines work by triggering the immune system to produce antibodies. Antibodies protect us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.

6. Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine or spread COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No. The vaccine doesn't contain the virus that causes COVID-19, which means the vaccine itself won't cause you to get or spread COVID-19.

7. Does the vaccine keep me from getting COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are very effective (up to 95% for Moderna and Pfizer, and 66% for the J&J vaccine) in preventing COVID-19 infection, particularly the most severe cases of the virus. All 3 vaccines are extremely effective in preventing hospitalizations and death due to COVID-19.

8. How many doses will I need?

It depends. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two doses. Johnson & Johnson is offering a single dose vaccine. Protection from the vaccine is not immediate.

The first dose starts building protection and the second dose, given a few weeks later, is needed to get the most protection the vaccine has to offer. It is important that you get both doses. If you don't, you won't be as well-protected from COVID-19 as you could be. It will take 14 days after



you receive your 2nd dose of Moderna or Pfizer or 14 days after receiving your 1 dose of J&J to be considered fully vaccinated and receive the highest level of protection

10. If I had COVID-19 already, do I need to get vaccinated?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccinations are recommended to those who've already had COVID-19. However, vaccination should be deferred until recovery from acute illness (if the person had symptoms) and criteria have been met to discontinue isolation. To find a location for vaccination you can use [Boston.gov's vaccine finder](#).

VACCINE SAFETY

11. How do we know if the vaccine is safe?

Vaccines go through more testing than any other pharmaceutical. Before any vaccine is made available, it must go through rigorous development and testing. For more info [check out the CDC COVID-19 website](#).

12. What are potential side effects of the vaccine?

Mild side effects such as fever, body aches, and fatigue have been reported. This is a sign the immune system is working. Soreness and/or redness at the injection site is the most common reaction. For some people, these side effects were worse after the second dose.

Side effects from a vaccine usually go away on their own within a few days. You can take an over-the-counter medicine, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen to manage side effects after the vaccine. *However, it is recommended that you avoid taking these medications right before getting your vaccine.*

13. Should I get the vaccine if I have allergies?

Your healthcare provider will help you decide if it is safe for you to get vaccinated. There are many types of allergies and many people with allergies should get vaccinated. If you have had an immediate allergic reaction - even if it was not severe - to a vaccine or injectable therapy for another disease, ask your healthcare provider if you should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Everyone who gets the vaccine will be watched for 15 minutes after the injection to make sure they do not have any signs of an allergic reaction. People who have severe allergies to other vaccines or injectable medications will be watched for 30 minutes.

The vaccine does not contain any food products, including eggs and does not include metals. Once you are able to get the vaccine, talk to your allergist if you have concerns.

14. Can people who are pregnant and/or breastfeeding take the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, pregnant and/or breastfeeding individuals are now encouraged to take the vaccine. People who are pregnant should discuss the risks and benefits with her healthcare provider to help them make an informed decision.

We know that people who are pregnant who develop COVID-19 have an increased risk of severe illness and may have an increased risk of poor pregnancy outcomes like pre-term labor.



15. Given the differences between the different types/brands of vaccines, will it be communicated which vaccine patients are getting?

Yes, you will know which vaccine you are receiving.

16. What do we really know about potential long-term effects?

The effects documented to date are short-term and typical of many vaccines. Long-term effects are monitored for all vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccines.

17. Does the vaccine affect fertility?

No. There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine affects fertility. The vaccine is recommended even if you are planning to get pregnant soon.

18. What do we know about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

As of February 27, 2021, the FDA approved Johnson & Johnson for emergency distribution. This vaccine is currently available to the public in a single dose administration. It has been reported to be 66% effective against all COVID-19 infections and 95% effective against hospitalizations and death related to COVID-19 infections.

The CDC and FDA have recommended that use of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen (J&J/Janssen) COVID-19 vaccine resume in the United States, effective April 23, 2021. However, women between 18 and 49 years old especially should be aware of the rare risk of blood clots with low platelets after vaccination, and that other COVID-19 vaccines are available where this risk has not been seen. If you received a J&J/Janssen vaccine, here is what you need to know. Read the [CDC/FDA statement](#).

19. Do we anticipate the need for COVID-19 boosters or further vaccinations down the road?

No. No additional doses beyond the two-dose primary series are recommended at this time. The need for and timing of booster doses for COVID-19 vaccines have not been established.

20. My health condition isn't addressed here. How do I know if the vaccine is safe for me?

If you have concerns about taking the COVID-19 vaccine, talk to your healthcare provider.

21. After getting a COVID-19 vaccine will I test positive for COVID-19 on a viral test?

No. The vaccine does not provide you with active virus. *If you do test positive it is indicative of a true COVID-19 infection and you should contact your PCP*

22. After getting a vaccine, do I still need to get tested?

Yes. If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please get tested and notify your health care provider right away.

23. Does testing catch new variants?

Yes, Testing can identify a positive COVID-19 infection including variant strains.

