

How safe is the vaccine?

Vaccine safety

The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. The FDA reviewed the data from large clinical trials of the two authorized COVID-19 vaccines to make sure they are safe and effective for use. The VA, CDC and FDA will continue to monitor the safety and efficacy of these vaccines over time. This will help to determine how long the vaccines protect against COVID-19 and if there are any rare or long-term side effects we need to know about.

VA will be sharing vaccine data (without personal identification) with CDC. CDC has an independent group of experts that reviews all the safety data as soon as they come in and provides regular safety updates. Any possible problems will be quickly investigated to find out if the issue is related to the COVID-19 vaccine and determine the best course of action.

Read more about vaccine safety on the CDC COVID-19 vaccine website by scanning the QR code at the right.



Side effects

Both vaccines are well-tolerated and clinical trials did not reveal any significant safety concerns. However, mRNA vaccines are expected to cause side effects after vaccination, especially after the second dose.

The most common side effects of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine are warmth, redness or pain at injection site; fatigue; headache; muscle aches and/or fever. Symptoms typically last one to two days.

The most common side effects of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, are pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, swollen lymph nodes in the same arm as the injection, nausea and vomiting, and fever. Symptoms typically last several days.

You cannot get COVID-19 from either vaccine.

What can I expect after vaccination?

Veteran and employee safety are VA's top priorities. Vaccination with the COVID-19 vaccine will provide you with strong protection against infection with the virus that causes COVID-19. Still, after vaccination, individuals will need to follow the 3 W's:

- Wear a face covering
- Watch your distance (stay 6 feet apart)
- Wash your hands often

Please continue to follow federal, state and local safety guidelines.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans from Communities at High Risk of COVID-19:

What you need to know about getting the COVID-19 vaccine

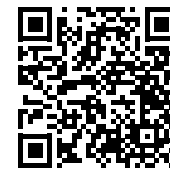
More information about the vaccine

Scan the code to visit the web pages

VA COVID-19 vaccination



CDC Coronavirus Vaccine



FDA Emergency Use Authorization



"VA is providing the COVID-19 vaccine first to Veterans and high-risk health care personnel, so we can flatten the curve and stop the devastation that COVID-19 is causing in our communities across the country. I look forward to getting the vaccine as soon as I am eligible."



Kameron Leigh Matthews, MD, JD, FAFAP
Chief Medical Officer
Veterans Health Administration

VA's goal is to provide vaccine for all health care personnel and Veterans who want to be vaccinated in 2021.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

When will vaccines be available for Veterans?

VA has been working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on a plan to offer a COVID-19 vaccine as they become available. VA's plan is based on five core ethical pillars: safety, maximizing the benefit of the vaccine, equity, fairness and transparency.

Limited vaccine at first

In planning for the early, limited distribution of vaccine, VA considered several factors including :

- Risk of acquiring infection
- Risk of severe illness and death if infected
- Risk of transmitting the disease to others
- Risk of harm to society if essential workers, including health care personnel, are unable to work

Highest risk health care personnel and Veterans will be first



Based on these risk factors, VA will offer the vaccine first to 1) health care personnel (HCP) as they are essential to continuing to care for patients throughout the pandemic and 2) Veterans living in Community Living Centers (CLCs) and spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI-D) units where the risk of severe illness and death due to COVID-19 is highest.

VA's ultimate goal is to have enough vaccine to vaccinate all Veterans and HCP who want to be vaccinated.

Where can I get the COVID-19 vaccine in 2021?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the first COVID-19 vaccines, developed by Pfizer-BioNTech and by Moderna through Emergency Use Authorizations. VA is offering the vaccine at facilities nationwide.

Why the initial vaccination sites were chosen

There were several reasons initial sites were selected, including having the ability to vaccinate large numbers of people and store the vaccines at extremely cold temperatures.

As more vaccines become available, VA care teams will reach out to eligible Veterans to schedule vaccination. Veterans seeking additional information can scan the QR code at the right to get to the CDC COVID-19 vaccination site for more information or contact their care team.



Who is at high risk of COVID-19 complications?

Certain medical conditions and situations put you at higher risk. Being over age 65 or having certain health conditions increases your risk of severe illness or death due to COVID-19.

Some Veterans are also members of communities that have been more impacted by COVID-19. It is important that everyone, especially those at high risk of COVID-19, receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is available to me?

- **You can protect yourself from COVID-19 illness and death.**
- **You could avoid transmitting COVID-19** to your loved ones and your community.
- **A vaccine could help slow the spread of COVID-19 in hard hit communities.** Some communities have been more impacted by COVID-19. According to the CDC, racial and ethnic minority groups represent 40% of the total U.S. population yet comprise nearly 60% of COVID-19 cases and 50% of COVID-19 deaths.
- **In clinical trials, vaccine efficacy was consistent across age, gender, racial and ethnic backgrounds.** The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines have been authorized by the FDA and have each demonstrated that they reduce the risk of getting COVID-19 by 95% and 94% respectively.
- **In clinical trials, vaccine side effects were consistent across age, gender, racial and ethnic backgrounds.**
- **The scientific review process for the vaccine authorization was rigorous.** Studies were conducted by independent scientific experts and based on examination of data from vaccine trials that involved tens of thousands of people.
- **Once enough people in the United States are vaccinated, we expect to reach community immunity.** This will protect at-risk populations that cannot develop resistance on their own, such as newborns and those with certain chronic illnesses.
- **Do your part.** Widespread vaccination is the best way to get us back to doing the things most important to us.