

# COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccine Distribution

## December 2020



We know it's important for you to stay updated regarding the developments around the COVID-19 vaccine. We wanted to share some information about what we know today.

### **Important note:**

This document is intended to be used as a reference for employers and brokers fielding questions about vaccines. This document should NOT be directly distributed to employees or members. Presbyterian will officially communicate with our members at a later time. Information regarding COVID-19 vaccination is rapidly developing, and the rules and regulations continue to be clarified by state and federal authorities. The following is designed to address the current status of PHP's response to vaccination distribution on the federal and state levels.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Vaccine Availability and Access**

#### **Q: When will the COVID-19 vaccine be available in New Mexico?**

A: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the Pfizer vaccine for Emergency Use Authorization. We expect about 17,500 doses of the Pfizer vaccine to arrive in mid- to late-December of this year.

#### **Q: Which COVID-19 vaccines will be available in New Mexico?**

A: The Pfizer vaccine is the first COVID-19 vaccine to be authorized for use in New Mexico. The Moderna vaccine may be approved by the FDA for emergency use soon, but it is unclear if/when Moderna's vaccine, or any other vaccine candidates being studied, will be available in NM. Visit <https://cv.nmhealth.org/covid-vaccine> for more info on availability.

#### **Q: Who will be able to get vaccinated first?**

A: The CDC recommends vaccinating frontline healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients and nursing home residents and staff as the highest priority. But please keep in mind that each state will develop its own distribution plan for the COVID-19 vaccine.

For more current information and updates, please visit the New Mexico Department of Health website at <https://cv.nmhealth.org/covid-vaccine>.

#### **Q: When, where, and how can I get vaccinated for COVID-19? What if I want to get the vaccine right away but I'm not in the priority population?**

A: The first doses of the vaccine will be distributed on a very limited basis for now. Distribution plans are still being discussed. Federal and state officials will determine when and how New Mexicans who want the vaccine can get it. Visit the NM Department of Health website for the latest information at <https://cv.nmhealth.org/covid-vaccine>.

#### **Q: Will I need more than one dose of the vaccine to be protected?**

A: Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two separate immunizations given at least three weeks apart. For more information visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

**Q: Do I have to get the COVID-19 vaccine? Is it required?**

A: The federal and state governments do not require you to get the COVID-19 vaccination. As vaccination plans roll out, please contact your employer or school administrator to find out if they have a vaccination policy.

**Q: Will I have to pay for the COVID-19 vaccine? How much will it cost?**

A: You should not have to pay for the COVID-19 vaccine if you choose to get it. The CARES Act passed by the U.S. Congress requires that the vaccine be administered with no cost share. This means that most members should not have to pay copays or coinsurance for either of the two doses needed to achieve immunization. However, the CARES Act does not apply to some self-funded employer plans so you should check with your employer to be sure.

**Vaccine Quality and Safety**

**Q: Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?**

A: The FDA will release fact sheets and safety information of COVID-19 vaccines approved for Emergency Use Authorization. Visit the CDC and FDA websites at **CDC.gov** and **FDA.gov** for the most recent information about the vaccines approved for use.

**Q: What are the side effects of the vaccine?**

A: The most common side effects noted for the Pfizer vaccine are:

- Arm soreness at the injection site
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Chills
- Mild fever

These mild symptoms are common with most vaccinations and don't last very long. Visit the FDA website for more information on side effects.

**Q: Is one COVID-19 vaccine better than another?**

A: No vaccine is 100% effective. However, both vaccines appear to be extremely effective in preventing COVID-19 infection. Visit **CDC.gov** for information on approved COVID-19 vaccines.

**Q: What if I want to choose which version of the vaccine I receive?**

A: At this time, the overall timeline for each vaccine's availability is unknown. It is likely that it will take months for multiple vaccines to be widely available to all populations. Right now, you may be unable, or very limited in the ability, to choose which version you can get.

**Q: What if I want to wait to get the vaccine because I still have concerns about it?**

A: The federal and state governments do not require you to be vaccinated. If you have concerns, please visit **CDC.gov** for more information about COVID-19 vaccines. You should also discuss your concerns with your primary care provider. They can help you make the best decision for your health.

**Q: Is there anyone who should NOT get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

A: Some vaccines may contain ingredients that some people are allergic to. Be sure to let your provider know of any allergies before getting any vaccine. You can view a list of ingredients for the Pfizer vaccine on the FDA website at [FDA.gov](https://www.fda.gov).

**After Vaccination**

**Q: After I receive the vaccination, am I fully protected against COVID-19?**

A: Not quite. No vaccine is 100% effective. Currently, both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are reported to be over 90% effective which is extremely promising. This means that nine out of ten people who are vaccinated will not become infected if exposed to COVID-19. And those who do become infected will likely experience much less severe symptoms than individuals who haven't been vaccinated.

**Q: If I've been vaccinated, can I still give others COVID-19?**

A: There isn't enough data at this time to provide a definite answer. Until we know more, you should assume that you can still become infected and transmit the virus to others. You should still practice social distancing, limit trips out of your home, wear face coverings when you do leave your home and wash your hands frequently. Avoid contact with exposed and infected individuals and stay home if you feel sick. Remember that being vaccinated doesn't guarantee complete immunity and you should not revert back to pre-pandemic activity.

**Other General Questions/Concerns**

**Q: What if I've already had COVID-19? Do I still need to be vaccinated for it?**

A: There is not enough information to suggest that you do or don't need a vaccination. Some information suggests that you may achieve longer-lasting immunity through vaccination even after having the virus. However, at this time, the CDC/FDA has not provided any guidance regarding vaccination after infection. You should discuss any questions about your health history and future immunizations with your provider.

**Q: What else can I do to protect myself and those around me?**

- ✓ Get a flu shot.
- ✓ Consult with your providers for all health concerns.
- ✓ Wear a mask.
- ✓ Continue to socially distance yourself from others.
- ✓ Wash your hands.