COVID-19 Vaccines FAQ

Safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines are one of the most important interventions to end the COVID-19 pandemic. California is working hard to be transparent, careful and, above all, equitable in efforts to provide a COVID-19 vaccine to everyone in California who needs and requests vaccination.

As a valued provider partner, your relationship and encouragement of member participation will make a huge impact on the fight to reduce the affects of COVID-19 on our community. The following list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) was developed to assist providers and affiliated health networks in navigating the availability and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines for CalOptima members.

What is currently authorized regarding the COVID-19 vaccines?

- U.S. Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) expected soon for two vaccines — EUA allows use based upon two months of safety data — full approval allows use based upon six months of safety data.
- To date, Pfizer received EUA status, with Moderna’s EUA status results anticipated soon.
- Distribution follows once EUA is granted.
- Limited doses are available at first, with priority to health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities.
  - Pfizer’s vaccine requires ultra-cold storage (minus 70 degrees Celsius) hospitals, CVS/Walgreens
  - Moderna’s vaccine requires cold storage (standard refrigerator) nursing homes
- California: First 327,000 Pfizer vaccine doses arrived week of December 14, 2020.

COVID-19 vaccine, what is it and how does it work?

- Two-dose COVID-19 mRNA vaccines
  - Pfizer (doses three weeks apart), Moderna (four weeks apart)
  - 94–95% protective against COVID-19 in 44K trial (Pfizer) and 30K trial (Moderna)
- mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid)
  - Not alive
  - Protein building instructions to make COVID-19 spike protein
  - Rapidly removed from body after protein made
  - Does not link into genes
  - Spike protein recognized as “not human” (body makes antibodies to it and removes it. Antibodies stay and protect from COVID infection)

Who will receive the COVID-19 vaccines?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the prioritized COVID-19 vaccinations will be distributed as follows:
- Phase 1a: Health care personnel and long-term care facility (LTCF) residents
- Phase 1b: Essential workers (food/agriculture, utilities, transportation, educators, police, firefighters, corrections officers)
- Phase 1c: Adults with high risk conditions or 65+ years old

Widespread vaccines will be available to everyone no sooner than mid-April 2021. At the present time, there is insufficient data to recommend vaccination for pregnant or breastfeeding persons, immunocompromised persons or children under 12 years of age.

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Who will receive the COVID-19 vaccines? (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Care Personnel (HCP) ~21 million</th>
<th>LTCF Residents ~3 million</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Hospitals</td>
<td>• Skilled nursing facilities (~1.3 M beds)</td>
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<td>• Emergency medical services</td>
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</table>

Examples

| • Hospitals                            | • Skilled nursing facilities (~1.3 M beds) |
| • Long-term care facilities            | • Assisted living facilities (~0.8 M beds) |
| • Outpatient clinics                   | • Other residential care (~0.9 M beds)    |
| • Home health care                     |                                         |
| • Pharmacies                           |                                         |
| • Emergency medical services           |                                         |
| • Public health                        |                                         |

What should I expect?

- Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is an intramuscular Injection. The following side effects were observed in Pfizer trial:
  - No major adverse events
  - Mild-moderate flu-like symptoms common for 1–2 days post-vaccine
    ♦ Fatigue 63%
    ♦ Muscle pain 38%
    ♦ Joint pain 24%
  - Headache 55%
  - Chills 32%
  - Fever 14%
  - Note — serious side effects: 4% fatigue, 2% headache
  - Overall, any symptoms:
    * 59% after 1st dose, 70% after 2nd dose
    * Over-the-counter (OTC) medications used 28% after 1st dose, 45% after 2nd dose
    * Fewer side effects if >55 years old (20% used OTCs after 1st dose, 38% after 2nd)

- Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is an intramuscular injection. The following side effects were observed in Moderna trial:
  - No major adverse events
  - Mild-moderate flu-like symptoms common but data not public yet
  - Serious side effects: fatigue10%, muscle aches 9%, joint pain 5%, headache 5%

It is important to stress to those taking either of the COVID-19 vaccinations to remain committed to taking both doses. Members should be prepared for their body’s immune response to react each time and that it is important not to pre-medicate (blunts immune response) with aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (e.g. Motrin/Advil). They may take OTC medications after vaccination, if the symptoms make them uncomfortable. Remember, they are not infectious. If they are feeling well enough to work, they can work.
How should providers prepare their staff?
- If possible, stagger vaccinations, especially with same-skill workers.
- Prepare for 10–20% to call out sick due to post-vaccine symptoms.
- Provide a way to clear staff for entry symptom screening if symptoms occur in the first few days after vaccination.
- If possible, schedule vaccination to avoid important activities, including work shifts, for the day or two after vaccination
  - Applies to everyone: leadership, managers, staff
  - Plan for needing some coverage
- Be positive. Your response affects acceptance of second dose.

Where are the COVID-19 vaccines available?
There are two ways to obtain the vaccines:

**Option 1:** Pharmacy partnership for long-term care programs (CVS and Walgreens)
- CVS, Walgreens provide on-site vaccination at nursing homes
- Anticipate at least three on-site vaccine sessions, to capture everyone.
- Inquire if a few more on-site sessions are possible to stagger vaccination.
- Handles all required documentation
- Free of charge

**Option 2:** Direct provider enrollment to provide on-site vaccine at nursing homes.
- Enroll in COVIDReadi, located at: [https://ca.covidreadi.com/](https://ca.covidreadi.com/)
- Coordinate with local public health for vaccine, documentation process.

For the latest COVID-19 vaccine information visit the CalOptima website at [www.caloptima.org/Features/COVID-19/Vaccine.aspx](https://www.caloptima.org/Features/COVID-19/Vaccine.aspx).

The above information is provided by The Orange County Nursing Home Infection Prevention Team, which is coordinated by the University of California, Irvine Health and is jointly funded by Orange County Health Care Agency and CalOptima.