

# Answering Common Questions About COVID-19 Vaccines

Based on [recommendations](#) from the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#), an independent panel of medical and public health experts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that both healthcare personnel (HCP) and residents of long-term care facilities (LTCFs) be included among those offered the first supply of COVID-19 vaccines.

You are on the front lines and risk being exposed to COVID-19 each day on the job. Early vaccination can protect not only you from getting sick, but also help protect residents and your family members who may have underlying health conditions that put them at risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

## Q. Why is it important that LTCF staff receives COVID-19 vaccine, even if LTCF residents are vaccinated?

Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine is an important step to prevent getting sick with COVID-19 disease. HCP, including LTCF staff, were placed first in line to receive COVID-19 vaccine because of their essential role in fighting this deadly pandemic **and** their increased risk of getting COVID-19 and spreading it to their patients.

The decision to get vaccinated protects more than just your health. It can also help protect your colleagues, facility residents, families, and communities.

## Q. Will I still need to wear masks, gowns, or personal protective equipment in the facility after receiving COVID-19 vaccination?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines will be an important tool to help stop the pandemic. However, staff members who have been vaccinated should continue to follow all [current guidance](#) to protect themselves and others, including proper use of [personal protective equipment](#). Because we need to use all the prevention tools available, you should continue to cover your nose and mouth with a [mask](#) when around others, avoid [close contact](#) with people who are sick, [stay 6 feet away from others](#), avoid crowds, and [clean your hands](#) often.

The combination of getting vaccinated and following CDC's recommendations to [protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

## Q. Are COVID-19 vaccines being held to the same safety standards as other vaccines in the United States?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are being held to the same safety standards as all other vaccines. Several expert and independent groups evaluate the safety of vaccines being given to people in the United States. After a review of all the available information, CDC and [ACIP](#) agree that the lifesaving benefits of vaccinating LTCF residents against COVID-19 outweigh the possible risks.

## Q. Can I feel confident that COVID-19 vaccines are safe?

Yes. The safety of COVID-19 vaccines is a top priority. COVID-19 vaccines are being held to the same safety standards as all other vaccines. All COVID-19 vaccines being administered to LTCF staff and residents were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they meet safety standards and protect adults of different ages, races, and ethnicities. There were no serious safety concerns. CDC and the FDA will keep monitoring the vaccines to look for safety issues after they are authorized and in use.



## Q. Will I experience side effects after I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

There may be side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccination, but they should go away within a few days. Possible side effects include a sore arm, headache, fever, or body aches. This does not mean you have COVID-19. Side effects are signs that the vaccine is working to build immunity. Call your healthcare provider if they don't go away in a week or you have more serious symptoms.

For LTCFs CDC will work with pharmacies and other partners to report possible side effects (called "adverse events") to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#). You and your coworkers are also encouraged to report any adverse events immediately.

After receiving the vaccine, staff is encouraged to [enroll in v-safe](#). This is a smartphone tool you can use to tell CDC if you have any side effects after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. If you report serious side effects, someone from CDC will call to follow up.

## Q. Should I be concerned about side effects that may develop following COVID-19 vaccination, and will I need to miss work?

It can be hard to tell the difference between side effects from the vaccine and symptoms that you could have if you were infected with COVID-19. Your side effects from the vaccine could be mistaken for having COVID-19. So, it will be important to know the difference between the symptoms:

Symptoms that **CAN** occur after either COVID-19 **vaccination or infection** include:

- Fever, fatigue, headache, chills, muscles aches, and joint pain

Symptoms **NOT** likely to be from the COVID-19 vaccination (and you should look out for) include:

- Cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell. These are not the typical symptoms from a COVID-19 vaccination. They could be symptoms of COVID-19 or another infection. Talk to your facility leadership about staying home from work.

Your facility administrator and clinical leadership should have [a plan for helping staff manage symptoms](#) that may occur after receiving COVID-19 vaccination.

## Q. What happens if multiple staff members are out at the same time because of side effects after COVID-19 vaccination?

We understand your concerns about potential workforce shortages resulting from vaccine side effects. LTCF administrators may consider staggered administration, so that not all staff members are vaccinated on the same day. For example, facilities may have half of the staff vaccinated at the first on-site federal [Pharmacy Partnership for LTC Program](#) clinic day and the other half vaccinated at a second on-site clinic day or in the community at health department clinics run according to your jurisdiction's plan to vaccinate HCP. LTCF staff members who are not present for any on-site vaccination clinics are encouraged to get vaccinated at another location in the community. There will be no cost associated with COVID-19 vaccine for recipients, no matter where you get vaccinated.

## Q. What if I receive the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at my facility's on-site clinic, but then miss the clinic for the second dose? How do I finish the vaccine series?

Two shots are needed to provide the best protection against COVID-19, and the shots are given a few weeks apart. The first shot starts building protection, but people need a second shot a few weeks later to get the most protection the vaccine can offer.

Every person who receives a COVID-19 vaccine will also receive a vaccination record card that indicates the date the first dose was administered and which vaccine they received. If you receive the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at your LTCF but are not there to receive the second dose, you may bring the vaccination record card to another provider in your area to complete the vaccine series. Your facility may also work with pharmacy partners to arrange for staff to be at the facility during future clinics, but this will vary across facilities.

