

COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ



There are a lot of questions about the COVID-19 vaccines, and we're happy to help answer those questions with important information from local, state and national health experts. Check out the information below to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccines, including the benefits of the vaccines, how the vaccines were developed and tested, how and when you can get a vaccine, and much more.

How did scientists ensure the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective?

Like all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines are required to meet the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) safety and effectiveness requirements before they are made available to the public. There are several factors that helped accelerate the development and testing of COVID-19 vaccines, including major government funding and technological advances. Usually, vaccine development and trials happen one after the other, and it can take some time. For COVID-19 vaccines, the federal government provided substantial additional funding to conduct vaccine development and trials at the same time, making the process more efficient. While it was a faster process, it was still a rigorous process. To ensure vaccines are safe and effective, the FDA required the same three phases of clinical trials it does for any vaccine. Read more from the FDA about the COVID-19 Vaccine Development and Approval Process [here](#).

When will the COVID-19 vaccines be available?

The first round of COVID-19 vaccines began distribution in December. Colorado's distribution phases are based on federal guidelines. Because the initial supply of vaccine is very limited, it will be distributed first to people most at risk for COVID-19. Phase 1A includes the highest-risk health care workers and individuals (including long-term care facility staff and residents). Phase 1B includes Coloradans aged 70+, moderate-risk health care workers, first responders, frontline essential workers, essential government officials and essential frontline journalists. The next stage will be higher risk individuals (including people aged 60-69 and those with certain health risks) and other essential workers. The final phase will be for the general population.

You can take a closer look at the state's COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan [here](#). For answers to other COVID-19 vaccine questions, visit the [COVID-19 vaccine page on El Paso County Public Health's website](#).

Who will get the COVID-19 vaccine first?

The initial supply of COVID-19 vaccines is very limited, which means vaccines will not be immediately available to everyone who wants one. Health agencies across the country plan to distribute COVID-19 vaccines in phases until the vaccines are more readily available. Colorado will follow that model. Colorado has a COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan that's based on federal guidelines. Based on that plan, Colorado will be distributing COVID-19 vaccines in a phased approach, starting with those most at risk for COVID-19:

Phase 1A: Frontline healthcare workers, long-term care facility staff and residents.

Phase 1B: Coloradans age 70+, moderate-risk healthcare workers, first responders, frontline essential workers, essential government officials and essential frontline journalists.

Phase 2: The next phase of vaccinations will be available to higher risk individuals (including people aged 60-69 and those with certain health risks) and other essential workers.

Phase 3: General public (anyone under 60 without high-risk health conditions).

When and how can I get a vaccine?

Colorado is distributing COVID-19 vaccines in a phased approach. To find out what phase you're in and learn more about the state's COVID-19 vaccine distribution timeline, please visit the [state's vaccine website](#).

Phase 1A of the state's plan includes frontline healthcare workers and long-term care facility staff and residents. Phase 1B includes Coloradans age 70+, moderate-risk healthcare workers, first responders, frontline essential workers, essential government officials and essential frontline journalists. We do not yet have the exact dates that vaccines will be available for the entire Phase 1 population.

Details about when and how phases will receive a vaccine are still being worked on. Public Health recognizes the sense of urgency surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine, and understands the public's excitement, however we all need to remember to be patient while we wait for more vaccines to arrive.

State and local public health agencies are dedicated to keeping the public up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccine availability and distribution information. Please visit the [vaccine page on El Paso County Public Health's website](#).

How many different COVID-19 vaccines will be available? Is one better than another?

While there are multiple manufacturers developing COVID-19 vaccines, only two vaccines have been approved by the FDA at this time. There will likely be some slight differences between them such as time between doses, shelf-life, and when they are expected to be distributed within the United States. Both Pfizer's and Moderna's COVID-19 vaccines require two doses. Both vaccines are more than 90 percent effective.

To learn more about COVID-19 vaccines, their effectiveness, anticipated distribution and more, visit the [vaccine page on El Paso County Public Health's website](#).

What are the benefits to getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

Like any vaccine, the COVID-19 vaccine is intended to prevent recipients from getting seriously ill even if they do get COVID-19. The vaccine may also protect people around you, because it could prevent spread of the disease, which is especially important for anyone at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools we have available. The combination of getting vaccinated and following everyday preventative measures will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

Learn more about the [benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine](#), so you will be ready when the vaccine is available to you.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine make me feel sick?

Some recipients of the COVID-19 vaccine have reported side effects, almost all of which have been mild (minor cold- or flu-like symptoms). While some people may feel a little sick after getting a COVID-19 vaccine, the vaccine will not give you COVID-19.

The approved vaccines, and most COVID-19 vaccines that are awaiting approval, will require two doses, an initial dose and a booster dose. It's very important that everyone receiving the vaccine get both doses, even if they feel a little sick after the first shot. The vaccine will not be fully effective if recipients don't receive both doses.

For more information about how the COVID-19 vaccines will work, talk to your doctor or visit the [El Paso County Public Health's website](#).

Is it okay to get the flu vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine in the same year?

Getting a flu vaccine this year is more important than ever because we need to ensure our health care systems aren't overwhelmed during the pandemic. The COVID-19 vaccine is not yet available to everyone, but the flu vaccine is available now, which means you don't have to wait to protect yourself from flu.

The state health department recommends everyone age 6 months and older get the flu vaccine. Getting a flu vaccine will not protect you against COVID-19, but a flu vaccination will reduce your risk of getting the flu and being hospitalized because of the flu.

For more information on flu prevention visit [El Paso County Public Health's website](#).

How do I stay safe until I can get the COVID-19 vaccine?

We all must continue to practice prevention measures and follow public health guidance until a vaccine is widely available, which likely won't be until sometime in 2021.

Prevention measures like wearing a mask properly, staying at least six feet away from people not in your household, avoiding large crowds, washing your hands often, and staying home when we are sick are the best ways to keep yourself and your loved ones safe from COVID-19 until you are able to receive the vaccine.

For more information on COVID-19, and the best ways to stay safe and healthy, visit [El Paso County Public Health's website](#).

