



December 16, 2020

9 Things to Know about the U.S. COVID-19 Vaccination Program

Now that there is an authorized and recommended vaccine to prevent COVID-19 in the United States, here are 9 things you need to know about the new COVID-19 Vaccination Program and COVID-19 vaccines, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

1. **The safety of COVID-19 vaccines is a top priority.** The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Federal partners are working together to ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines. CDC has developed a new tool, v-safe, as an additional layer of safety monitoring to increase our ability to rapidly detect any safety issues with COVID-19 vaccines. V-safe is a new smartphone-based, after-vaccination health checker for people who receive COVID-19 vaccines. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/vsafe.html>)
2. **COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you from getting COVID-19.** In a study of more than 43,000 participants and following them for 2 months, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was 95.0% effective in preventing symptomatic lab-confirmed COVID-19 disease in persons without evidence of previous coronavirus infection. Also, based on what we know about vaccines for other diseases, experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19. Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Getting COVID-19 may offer some natural protection, known as immunity. But experts don't know how long this protection lasts, and the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity. COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by creating an antibody response without having to experience serious illness.
3. **Two doses are needed.** You need 2 doses of the currently available COVID-19 vaccine. A second shot 3 weeks after your first shot is needed to get the most protection the vaccine has to offer against this serious disease. Get the second shot even if you have side effects after the first shot, unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to get a second shot. It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. COVID-19 vaccines that require 2 shots may not protect you until a week or two after your second shot.
4. **Right now, CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccine be offered to healthcare personnel and residents of long-term care facilities [like nursing homes].** Because the current supply of COVID-19 vaccine in the United States is limited, CDC recommends that initial supplies of COVID-19 vaccine be offered to healthcare personnel and long-term care facility residents.
5. **There is currently a limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine in the United States, but supply will increase in the weeks and months to come.** The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as large enough quantities are available. Once vaccine is widely available, the plan is

to have several thousand vaccination providers offering COVID-19 vaccines in doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and federally qualified health centers.

6. **After COVID-19 vaccination, you may have some side effects. This is a normal sign that your body is building protection.** The side effects from COVID-19 vaccination may feel like flu and might even affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. Common side effects include: on the arm where you got the shot: pain and swelling; throughout the rest of your body: fever, chills, tiredness, and headache. If you have pain or discomfort, talk to your doctor about taking an over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. To reduce pain and discomfort where you got the shot: apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area, and use or exercise your arm; to reduce discomfort from fever: drink plenty of fluids, and dress lightly. In most cases, discomfort from fever or pain is normal. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider: if the redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours; and if your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days. Side effects were more commonly reported after the second dose than after the first dose, and were less common in people older than 55.
7. **Cost is not an obstacle to getting vaccinated against COVID-19.** Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccination providers may be able to charge administration fees for giving the shot. Vaccination providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.
8. **The first COVID-19 vaccine is being used under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Many other vaccines are still being developed and tested.**
9. **COVID-19 vaccines are one of many important tools to help us stop this pandemic.** It's important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic as we learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real-world conditions.

We need to continue wearing masks over the nose and mouth, wash our hands frequently, practice social distancing by staying at least 6 feet away from others, and avoid crowds and indoor gatherings for the time being. There is light at the end of this long, dark tunnel. But, we must continue to stay safe until more and more of us receive the vaccine. Be sure to do your research from reliable sources of information, and stay safe!

Sincerely,



La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District