

COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

In December 2020, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued emergency use authorizations (EUAs) allowing two COVID-19 vaccines to be distributed in the U.S. In late February 2021, the FDA issued an EUA for a third COVID-19 vaccine. While there was a temporary pause in the use of the third vaccine option, from Johnson & Johnson, due to reports of a rare and severe type of blood clot, the FDA and the CDC have determined that the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine should be resumed because the data show that the vaccine's potential benefits outweigh its known and potential risks in individuals 18 years of age and older.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires a single dose while the other two require two doses and, for those with compromised immune systems, a third dose (Pfizer or Moderna vaccines only) may be recommended. Funding authorized by the CARES Act covers the cost of these COVID-19 vaccines. **Members will not have to pay anything to get a COVID-19 vaccine.**

Q: Will I be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine at my network pharmacies?

A: Yes. You can get COVID-19 vaccines at any network pharmacy.

Q: How can I learn more about getting a vaccine in my state?

A: We have prepared a state-by-state guide that may help. [Click here](#) to view the guide, and select your state to learn more.

Q: Will COVID-19 vaccines be covered by Medicare?

A: Yes. If you are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan during calendar year 2020 and 2021, payment for the COVID-19 vaccine and its administration will be made through the original fee-for-service Medicare program. This means that you can be vaccinated against COVID-19 with no copay/cost share or deductible. Please present your red, white, and blue Medicare card at the pharmacy at the time of vaccination.

Q: If I am not a Medicare member, will the COVID-19 vaccine be covered by my plan, and what will it cost?

A: Elixir members who are not enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan can receive all recommended doses of the vaccine at **no copay/cost share or deductible**. The federal government has purchased the initial supply of vaccines, so the vaccine itself will be paid for through funding authorized by the CARES Act. Some pharmacies may charge an administration fee, but that should be paid for by your plan.

Q: Will the price be different if I have to go to an out-of-network (OON) pharmacy?

A: No. Members will receive both doses of the vaccine at no copay/cost share or deductible.

Q: Will the vaccine only be available at certain pharmacies?

A: Yes. To receive free supplies of COVID-19 vaccines, pharmacies, retail clinics, providers, and others must sign an agreement with the U.S. government.

Q: How will COVID-19 vaccines work?

A: COVID-19 vaccines will work like other vaccines, which expose recipients to antigens. These antigens help those who are vaccinated to develop an immune response that will be able to block or kill the virus if a person becomes infected.

Q. Will the COVID-19 vaccine be like the flu vaccine and require annual dosing?

A: For those who received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, a third dose may be recommended for individuals with compromised immune systems. This includes a range of conditions, a full list of which can be found on [CDC's website here](#).

And for those who received the Pfizer mRNA vaccine, the CDC has updated its guidance to the following:

- People 65 years and older and residents in long-term care settings **should** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series
- People aged 50–64 years with [underlying medical conditions](#) **should** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series
- People aged 18–49 years with [underlying medical conditions](#) **may** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on their individual benefits and risks
- People aged 18-64 years who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting **may** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on their individual benefits and risks

This applies only to those who received Pfizer as their primary vaccine series. Those who received the Moderna series or the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine should not receive a Pfizer booster. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist today about a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine **IF** you previously received the **Pfizer** vaccine.

Q. Is an additional dose recommended for members who previously received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

A: Not at this time. We are closely monitoring this situation and will keep you posted in the event this changes.

Q: Most vaccines take years to develop. How did we speed up development of a COVID-19 vaccine and has that affected its safety?

A: It's correct that vaccine development usually takes years. However, in this case, developers were able to speed up the process, in part because of efforts that had been underway on previously known coronaviruses (SARS-CoV-1 and MERS CoV). In addition, the U.S. government aided the process by allowing manufacturing to start while the clinical trials were ongoing. Data collected from thousands of participants in clinical trials help the FDA determine the safety of the vaccine.

Q: What is emergency use authorization?

A: An EUA is a way to facilitate the availability and use of medical treatments, including vaccines, during public health emergencies. Under an EUA, the FDA may allow unapproved medical products, or unapproved uses of approved medical products, in an emergency to diagnose, treat or prevent serious or life-threatening diseases or conditions.

Q: What are some of the clinical details about these vaccines?

A: Two of the currently offered vaccines are messenger RNA vaccines, or mRNA vaccines. These use a new approach to protecting against infectious diseases and are the first of their kind to be licensed in the United States. The third vaccine is manufactured using adenovirus type 26 (Ad26) to deliver a piece of the DNA, or genetic material, that is used to make the distinctive "spike" protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Vaccine	For Whom	Common Side Effects	Dosing ^{1,2,3}
Pfizer-BioNTech⁴	Authorized for use in those aged 12 and older and contraindicated for individuals with a known history of a severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to any vaccine component	Side effects of the vaccine typically resolve within 1-2 days and commonly include things like injection site reactions, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, nausea, feeling unwell, swollen lymph nodes and fever.	Series of two doses administered intramuscularly, three weeks apart, with a third-dose option for some.
Moderna	Authorized for use in those aged 18 and older and contraindicated for individuals with a known history of a severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to any vaccine component	Side effects of the vaccine typically resolve within 1-2 days and commonly include things like injection site reactions, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, nausea and vomiting and fever.	Series of two doses administered intramuscularly, one month (28 days) apart, with a third-dose option for those with compromised immune systems.
Johnson & Johnson/ Janssen⁵	Authorized for use in those aged 18 and older and contraindicated for individuals with a known history of a severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to any vaccine component	Side effects of the vaccine typically resolve within 1-2 days and commonly include things like injection site reactions, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, and nausea.	Single dose (0.5 mL each) administered intramuscularly,

1. According to interim CDC clinical considerations, doses administered within a grace period of ≤ 4 days from the recommended date for the second dose are considered valid; however, doses administered earlier do not need to be repeated. The second dose should be administered as close to the recommended interval as possible. However, there is no maximum interval between the first and second dose of either vaccine.
2. Both doses of the two-dose series should be completed with the same product. However, if two doses of different mRNA COVID-19 vaccine products are inadvertently administered, no additional doses of either product are recommended at this time.
3. For the immunocompromised, the third-dose of mRNA vaccine should be administered at least 28 days after the second dose.
4. The CDC is recommending a booster shot for some people, to be administered at least six months after the completion of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine series. Details are available at <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/p0924-booster-recommendations-.html>
5. The CDC and the FDA had recommended a temporary pause in the use of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, but its usage has now been resumed.

The CDC advises that vaccine providers observe patients with a history of allergic reactions (due to any cause) for 30 minutes after vaccination. All other persons should be observed for 15 minutes after vaccination to monitor for the occurrence of immediate adverse reactions. The CDC also states that appropriate medical treatment must be immediately available to treat a patient who experiences a severe allergic reaction to the vaccine.

If any recipients of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine develop severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain or shortness of breath within three weeks after vaccination, they should contact their health care providers.

Q: Does Elixir Mail Order Pharmacy have the vaccine?

A: No. As a mail order pharmacy, Elixir Pharmacy is unable to administer the vaccine directly to members.

Q: Are COVID-19 vaccines available at Rite Aid locations?

A: Yes. For updated information on vaccine eligibility in your area and for scheduling appointments at Rite Aid, visit Rite Aid's [COVID-19 page](#). Vaccine doses are limited, and availability is updated daily. Store and pharmacy associates are not able to schedule appointments.

Q: Which vaccines is Rite Aid administering?

A: Rite Aid is administering all three vaccines across its various locations. [Visit Rite Aid's website to learn more.](#)