

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. Of the three options now available, one requires a single dose and two require two doses. 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. Once the vaccine is available to pharmacies in your network, claims for the administration of the vaccine for non-Medicare members will process through Elixir at \$0 member copay. **However, in the early phases, the vaccine will not be widely available to the general public.**

Q: Why won't it be widely available?

A: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is making recommendations for who should get the vaccine first. You can learn more about these recommendations [here](#).

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. That means that both doses will be available to you at 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 both 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: Although some vaccines can provide long-lasting immunity, we do not have enough information to know about these yet. Currently, no additional doses beyond the primary single or two-dose series are recommended at this time.

Q: Most vaccines take years to develop. How have we been able to speed up development for 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. Both currently available options have been shown to be safe and effective.

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.

The two-dose vaccines are not interchangeable; both required doses have to be the same vaccine.

Vaccine	For Whom	Common Side Effects	Dosing ^{1,2}
Pfizer-BioNTech	Authorized for use in those aged 16 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
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
Johnson & Johnson/Janssen	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.

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.

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, view the [Eligibility Guide](#). Vaccine doses are extremely 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; however, each store will only provide one type of vaccine at a time. Rite Aid is working to offer additional locations for increased vaccination capability.

Q: Will Elixir/Rite Aid support on-site workplace vaccination events?

A: Due to vaccine storage requirements, Rite Aid will only administer the vaccine in Rite Aid Pharmacy locations. As new vaccinations become available, we may consider possible worksite options in states where Rite Aid stores are located.