



FAQs About the COVID-19 Vaccine

Californians have worked hard to help slow the spread of COVID-19. The State is making safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines available. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is leading California's vaccine efforts in partnership with all 58 California counties. We will update the Questions and Answers below as new information is available.

There are three sections in this document to help you find what you are looking for. Click a link below to jump to each section, or just scroll through the whole document.

[Section 1: Vaccine Supply, Safety, and How Vaccines Work](#)

[Section 2: Who is Eligible for the Vaccine, and How to Get It](#)

[Section 3: Consent, Privacy, and Other Legal Questions](#)

Section 1: Vaccine Supply, Safety, and How COVID-19 Vaccines Work

Q1. Does California have COVID-19 vaccines?

A1. Yes, there currently are three (3) vaccines available in California: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Janssen (also known as Johnson & Johnson). Scientists are working to create other COVID-19 vaccines. Please note that vaccine supplies are limited.

Q2. How are the vaccines given?

A2. All three vaccines are given as shots into a muscle. The most common spot is your upper arm. Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna both require two shots, and Janssen requires one shot. For the vaccines that require two shots, the person giving you your first shot will help you arrange an appointment for your second shot.

Q3. What vaccine is the best one to get? Will I have a choice?

A3. The best vaccine you can get is the one you can get first! The vaccines offer strong protection against serious illness, hospitalizations and death. Until more supplies of the vaccines are available, you should get whichever vaccine is available at the time of your vaccination appointment. Please be aware that the vaccines take about two weeks to protect you after you get your last shot.

Q4. Are there enough vaccines for everyone in California?

A4. Right now, there are not enough vaccines for all Californians who want to get vaccinated. See [Section 3](#) of this document to learn who can get the vaccine first and how you can prove you are eligible. It is important to know that just because someone is eligible for a vaccine does not mean that a vaccine is available when they want it.

Q5. What does the COVID-19 vaccine do? How does it work?

A5. The vaccines offer strong protection against what matters most: serious illness, hospitalizations and death. None of these vaccines provide 100 percent protection for everyone.

The vaccines work by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. It typically takes a few weeks after vaccination for the body to build protection (immunity) against the virus.

Getting the COVID-19 vaccine AND taking steps like wearing a mask, social distancing, and washing your hands are the best ways to protect yourself and the people you love.

Q6. Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

A6. Yes, the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Vaccines save lives and help reduce hospitalizations. Scientists, the federal government, and a group of experts in several western states make sure each vaccine is safe. Millions of people in California and the United States have safely received COVID-19 vaccines.

As Californians learn more about how safe and effective the COVID-19 vaccines are, we hope as many people as possible will choose to get the vaccine.

Q7. Does the vaccine work (is it effective)?

A7. Yes, in general, the vaccines work very well. Every vaccine is different. It is very important to follow your doctor's instructions for each vaccine so it works the way it is supposed to. If you need to get two shots, then you have to get both shots before your vaccine is most effective. Please be aware that the vaccines take about two weeks to protect you after you get your last shot.

It is important to wear a face covering, practice social distancing, and wash hands frequently EVEN after you get a vaccine. While you might not get sick yourself, other people may have not been vaccinated yet.

Q8. Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

A8. No, the vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. You might hear about some people who got COVID-19 even though they had the vaccine. This is because the vaccine did not have enough time to work and provide protection before they caught COVID-19, not because the vaccine gave it to them.

Q9. Will the vaccine alter my DNA?

A9. No, COVID-19 vaccines will not change your DNA.

Q10. Will the vaccines make me feel sick or give me side effects?

A10. You may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection. These side effects may affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. Some people have no side effects.

Common side effects are pain, redness or swelling on the arm where you got the shot, or tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever or nausea. Talk to your doctor about taking over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen, acetaminophen, aspirin, or antihistamines, for any pain and discomfort you may experience after getting vaccinated.

If you are worried about feeling sick or having an allergic reaction, talk with your doctor before getting the vaccine. Talk to your doctor first if you have a history of allergic reactions to shots, or if you have any questions.

Q11. How long does it take for the vaccine to work (protect you)?

A11. Two of the vaccines require you to get two shots before they can protect you. The Janssen vaccine only requires one shot. All the vaccines need about two weeks to fully protect you after you get your last shot. It is important to wear a mask and follow social distancing rules EVEN after you get the vaccine.

Q12. Where can I find more information about the COVID-19 vaccines?

A12. Good resources for vaccine information are:

- Each of the approved vaccines are described here: [U.S. COVID-19 Vaccine Product Information | CDC](#)
- <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>
- You can also call the Statewide COVID-19 Hotline: (833) 422-4255
- [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) COVID-19 Vaccines Home Page](#)

Q13. What are the “monoclonal antibody” treatments for COVID-19 I have heard about in the news?

A13. The federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved two monoclonal antibody treatments for people who have mild cases of COVID-19, but have a high risk (because of their age or health condition) of getting very sick and needing to go to the hospital. These treatments work by attaching to parts of the COVID-19 virus to help your immune system better recognize and fight off the COVID-19 virus.

If you test positive for COVID-19 and your doctor(s) thinks you are at risk of getting very sick, you might be referred to get this treatment. The treatment is given through intravenous (IV) infusion. The infusion and observation lasts about 2 hours, and you go home the same day. If your doctor thinks you need this treatment, the doctor will have a list of treatment locations near you.

Section 2: Who is Eligible and Where to Get a Vaccine

Q1. When can I be vaccinated?

A1. Effective April 15, everyone in California age 16 and older is eligible for vaccination. Regional centers are working with local county health officials to vaccinate consumers and staff who are eligible for vaccines. Not all counties will be vaccinating the same eligible groups at the same time. Each county decides when people can be vaccinated based upon how many vaccines they have available. This means that you might not be able to get your vaccine right away, depending on where you live, even if you are eligible.

Regional centers already are reaching out to eligible consumers, or their families and conservators, to help them access the vaccine. Being eligible does not mean that a vaccine actually will be available to you whenever you want to get one. Vaccine supply is limited.

Q2. Where can I be vaccinated?

A2. There are many different ways to get a vaccine.

- Sign up for an appointment, or for a notification when an appointment becomes available, at <https://myturn.ca.gov/> or by calling (833) 422-4255.
- Find vaccination sites through your local county health [department](#), or through your regular health care provider.
- The federal government also has a [website](#) that allows you to find vaccinations near you, usually from a pharmacy at Walgreens, CVS, RiteAid, Walmart, or Albertsons/Vons/Safeway stores, and some medical clinics.

Section 3: Consent, Privacy, and Other Legal Questions

Q1. Is consent required to get the vaccine?

A1. Yes, your consent is required to get the vaccine.

Q2. Who can give consent for a person receiving services from a regional center?

A2. Consent is given by the person who can make medical decisions. This may include:

- An adult regional center consumer can give their own consent. Consumers can ask for help from a family member or other individual they trust
- If needed, a consumer can [ask the State Council on Developmental Disabilities](#) to appoint an authorized representative to help them make decisions
- Parents or legal guardians of minor children
- People allowed under a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare

- Conservators of adults, if the court has given the conservator the right to make medical treatment decisions
- In some cases, a regional center Executive Director, when the person is unable to and no one else can

Q3. Is my privacy protected if I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

A3. Yes. California law says you can't be identified, unless you consent to sharing your information.

Q4. Do I have to get the vaccine? Is it mandatory?

A4. No, you do not have to get the vaccine. The state and federal government do not mandate (require) vaccination. Employers cannot mandate vaccination either. [See Answer 12 in this section \(Section 3\) for more about employers.](#)

Experts think it is a good idea to get vaccinated because studies show the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and very good at protecting people from COVID-19. Please see Section 1 for important safety information about the COVID-19 vaccines. [Please also see Question #8 below.](#)

Q5. How old do you have to be to get a vaccine?

A5. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is approved for people 16 years or older. The Moderna vaccine is approved for people 18 years or older. The person giving your vaccine shots will know which one is right for you.

Q6. I do not want my child to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Is this okay?

A6. For now, only people age 16 and older can get the COVID-19 vaccine. As a parent or legal guardian, you decide if your child gets the vaccine.

It is very important to protect yourself and the people around you in other ways like wearing masks, staying away from large groups of people, and washing your hands often. [Visit the CDC website here for more ways to help prevent COVID-19.](#) [Please see the Questions and Answers in Section 1 \(above\)](#) for important safety information about the COVID-19 vaccines.

Q7. What if I do not want my adult son or daughter to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

A7. In most cases, adults with developmental disabilities can choose if they want to get vaccinated.

If a consumer is conserved, the court conservatorship order will say if a conservator has the legal right to make "medical treatment" decisions like getting a vaccine. [Please see the Questions and Answers in Section 1 \(above\)](#) for important safety information about the COVID-19 vaccines.

Q8. What if I don't want the COVID-19 vaccine because of my disability and/or a medical condition?

A8. If you have an underlying medical condition or a history of allergic reactions to other vaccinations, it is important that you talk to your health care provider(s) about your vaccination options. Adults of any age with certain disabilities and/or medical conditions have a higher risk of getting very sick or dying from COVID-19, so you should make an informed decision about whether or not to get a vaccine.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [suggests](#) people with underlying medical conditions can receive the vaccine as long as they have not had [an immediate or severe allergic reaction](#) to a COVID-19 vaccine, or any of the vaccine ingredients.

Q9. Can my service provider(s) require me to get the COVID-19 vaccination or give me a 30-day notice if I don't get one?

A9. People must consent to getting the vaccine. The [law](#) requires service providers to respect consumer choices. [Regulations](#) give consumers the right to accept or reject medical care and health-related services like vaccines, except in certain cases. Service providers can require participants to follow safety guidelines including wearing a mask, washing hands and maintaining 6-feet of social distance.

There are limited reasons why a residential provider can give a 30-day notice and specific [regulatory procedures](#) providers must follow. Service providers cannot require you to receive the COVID-19 vaccination.

If you think your rights are being denied, there is a [regulatory process](#) that must be followed. The [Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy](#) (OCRA) may be able to help. You can use the numbers below to call OCRA:

- Northern California 1-800-390-7032 (TTY 877-669-6023)
- Southern California 1-866-833-6712 (TTY 877-669-6023)
- Or you can directly call the advocate for your regional center at the number listed on the [OCRA staff links page](#).

Q10. Can residential providers be held liable for helping individuals they serve get the vaccine?

A10. Consent for the vaccine is required. If a consumer or their legal guardian provides consent, helping that person get their COVID-19 vaccine does not create liability, and may help protect the health of other residents in the home.

Q11. What if I am being pressured by my roommate because I did not get, or do not want to get, the COVID-19 vaccine?

A11. You have the right to decide if you want to get the vaccine. A roommate may pressure you to be vaccinated, but the choice is yours. Similarly, your roommate also has the right to choose if they get the vaccine.

Q12. Can my employer ask me to show proof I've had a COVID-19 vaccination?

A12. Federal Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission (EEOC) [guidance](#) says your employer may ask you to provide information about whether you have been vaccinated, such as providing a vaccine card. The vaccine card does not have any information about your health or medical condition(s). Your employer is not allowed to ask for any information about your health or medical condition(s). The EEOC guidance also explains that employers must provide reasonable accommodations to employees who refuse to be vaccinated because of a disability or their religious beliefs.

