



FAQs FOR COVID-19 VACCINES

Californians have worked hard to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines are available. These vaccinations also protect against COVID variants like “Delta”. We will update the Questions and Answers below as new information is available.

There are three sections in this document to help you find the information that you are seeking. 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, currently there are three (3) vaccines available in California, called Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Janssen (also known as Johnson & Johnson). Scientists are working to create other COVID-19 vaccines.

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. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines both require two shots, and the Janssen vaccine 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? Do 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, hospitalization and death. You should get whichever vaccine is available. 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. Yes. Over 49 million shots already have been given in California, and millions of doses currently are available.

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

A5. Although the vaccines do not provide 100 percent protection for everyone, they do offer strong protection against what matters most: serious illness, hospitalizations and death.

The vaccines work by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. It typically takes two 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 and deaths. 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.

Nationally, over 95% of hospitalizations and 99% of deaths occur in unvaccinated people. 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, including against COVID variants. 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, 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, you still can spread COVID-19 to other people.

Q8. Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

A8. No, the vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. Some people get COVID-19 even though they had the vaccine. This may be because no vaccine is 100% effective. This also may be because the vaccine did not have enough time to provide

protection before they caught COVID-19, or does not fully protect against a certain COVID-19 variant. In most cases, vaccinated people who still get COVID will not become seriously ill.

Q9. Is the vaccine safe if I am pregnant, or trying to become pregnant?

A9. The CDC has issued an [advisory](#) that all three vaccines used in the United States are safe for women who are pregnant, or trying to become pregnant. The advisory includes links to the underlying scientific studies and data.

Q10. Will the vaccine alter my DNA?

A10. No, COVID-19 vaccines will not change your DNA.

Q11. Will the vaccines make me feel sick or give me side effects?

A11. 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.

Common side effects are pain, redness or swelling 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.

Q12. How long does it take for the vaccine to work (to protect you)?

A12. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna 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.

Q13. Where can I find more information about the COVID-19 vaccines?

A13. Good resources for vaccine information are:

- Each of the approved vaccines are described here: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/index.html>
[Product Information | CDC](#)
- <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>
- You can also call the Statewide COVID-19 Hotline: (833) 422-4255

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

Q14. Do I need a booster shot?

A14. A booster shot is an additional dose of a vaccine, after someone's immunity has declined over time. As of the end of September 2021, only certain people who previously received the Pfizer vaccine are eligible for a booster shot. Details about this can be found here: https://www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/DDSDirective_COVID-19VaccineBoosters_09242021.pdf.

Additionally, the federal CDC currently is recommending that moderately to severely immunocompromised people receive an additional dose at least 28 days AFTER receiving their second shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. There is no approval for an additional dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. The definition of “moderately to severely immunocompromised people” is people who have:

- Been receiving active cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood
- Received an organ transplant and are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Received a stem cell transplant within the last 2 years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)
- Advanced or untreated HIV infection
- Active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may suppress your immune response

People should talk to their healthcare provider about their medical condition, and whether getting a booster shot is appropriate for them.

Q15. What are the “monoclonal antibody” treatments for COVID-19 I have heard about in the news?

A15. The federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved 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. If your doctor thinks you need this treatment, the doctor will have information about the treatment, and a list of treatment locations near you.

Q16. The information about vaccines, masks, and face covering seems to change all the time. Where can I find the latest information?

A16. Resources for further information are:

- The latest information about vaccines, masks, face coverings, and COVID testing can be found at <https://covid19.ca.gov/>.

- County public health departments also may have different rules to follow. You can find your county public health office's website from this site: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/LocalHealthServicesAndOffices.aspx>.
- The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also provides information, advice, and guidance, at <https://www.cdc.gov/>.
- The federal Food and Drug Administration regulates vaccines and their use, at: <https://www.fda.gov/>.

Q17. My child receives special education services at our local public school. Where can I find information about how schools will operate next year?

A17. The federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued guidance for the safe opening of kindergarten through 12th grade schools. The purpose of their guidance is to provide all students with access to safe and full in-person instruction and as much instruction time as possible.

You can find the CDPH guidance at:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>

And FAQs at:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Schools-FAQ.aspx>

The federal CDC guidance is at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

Local school districts also may provide additional guidance and help you understand how they will implement the federal and state requirements. If you have questions, please contact your local school district. A list of California school districts and schools may be found here: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/SchoolDirectory/Topic>

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

Q1. When can I be vaccinated?

A1. Effective May 15, 2021, everyone in California age 12 and older became eligible for vaccination. Regional centers have been reaching out to eligible consumers, or their families and/or legally authorized representative for health care decisions, to help them access the vaccine. If you want assistance, please contact your regional center or service coordinator.

Q2. Where can I be vaccinated?

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

- Sign up for an appointment 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 <https://www.vaccines.gov/> 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. If you are a minor, then the person who is authorized to make your medical decisions can decide.

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 or designee, when the person is unable to give consent 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. However, 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 the serious effects of COVID-19 and its variants. [Please also see Question #8 below.](#)

Employers may require their employees to become vaccinated, and if they do, they must accommodate certain medical and religious exceptions. [See Answer 12 in this section \(Section 3\) for more about employers.](#)

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

A5. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is approved for people 12 years or older. The Moderna and Janssen vaccines are 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 12 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:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

[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. 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.

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. 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 or other member of my household 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 or other member of your household 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, or not.

Q12. Can my employer require me to become vaccinated?

A12. Yes. Your employer may require vaccinations, and some employers must require vaccination. However, your employer also must accommodate medical exemptions (such as an allergy to vaccine ingredients) and religious beliefs. Your employer also may require COVID testing. Additional information is available here:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx>, and here: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-issues-updated-covid-19-technical-assistance>.

Q13. Can my employer ask me to show proof I've had a COVID-19 vaccination?

A13. 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).

Detailed information on proof of vaccination, and related matters, can be found here: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Vaccine-Record-Guidelines-Standards.aspx>.

