

Answering Common Questions About COVID-19 Vaccines

Based on [recommendations](#) from the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#), an independent panel of medical and public health experts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends residents of long-term care facilities (LTCFs) be included among those offered the first supply of COVID-19 vaccines. Making sure LTCF residents can receive COVID-19 vaccination as soon as vaccine is available will help save the lives of those who are at the highest risk for infection and severe illness from COVID-19.

CDC has provided frequently asked questions and answers especially for LTCF residents and their families to help everyone understand the importance of COVID-19 vaccination. The information below is especially tailored to help answer questions before vaccination. [The CDC website](#) offers many other free tools in multiple languages to help answer common questions that are not specific to LTCF residents.

Q. Can residents and loved ones feel confident that COVID-19 vaccines are safe?

Yes. The safety of COVID-19 vaccines is a top priority. All of the vaccines that will be used have gone through the same safety tests and meet the same safety standards as other vaccines.

To help make important medical products, including vaccines, available quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can use what is known as an [Emergency Use Authorization \(EUA\)](#). For an [EUA](#) to be issued for a vaccine, for which there is adequate manufacturing information to ensure quality and consistency, FDA must determine that the known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine.

The U.S. vaccine safety system monitors the safety of all vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, to ensure they are as safe as possible. As people begin receiving COVID-19 vaccinations, CDC and FDA will continue to

closely monitor vaccine safety. Learn more about [COVID-19 vaccine safety monitoring](#).

Q. Do the benefits of vaccination outweigh the possible risks?

After a review of all the available information, ACIP and CDC agreed that the lifesaving benefits of vaccinating LTCF residents against COVID-19 outweigh the possible risks. COVID-19 vaccines that are being delivered to LTCFs were tested in large studies that included adults age 65 and older. The study results showed that the vaccines were safe and provided protection from COVID-19 in these older adults.

Q. What are the possible side effects?

The most common side effect is pain at the injection site, and some individuals experience symptoms like fever and chills. These side effects tend to be mild to moderate and go away quickly. These side effects are signs that the immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to do. It is working and building up protection against the disease. Serious side effects after vaccination were very rare.



Q. Will residents still need to wear masks after receiving COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines will be an important tool to help stop the pandemic. However, everyone, including LTCF staff and residents, should continue to follow all current guidance, including facility policies on visitation, to protect themselves and others. Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like covering your nose and mouth with a [mask](#) and [staying at least 6 feet away from others](#), help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or [spreading it to others](#). Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations to [protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

Q. Will residents have to get two shots to be protected from COVID-19?

Yes. All people who receive COVID-19 vaccine should get two shots. The first shot starts building protection, but people need a second shot a few weeks later to get the most protection the vaccine can offer.

Q. How do residents and their loved ones report possible side effects?

It is important to notify your healthcare provider if you are experiencing side effects after COVID-19 vaccination. CDC is also working with pharmacies and other partners to report possible side effects (called "adverse events") to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#). Facility residents and their loved ones are encouraged to report any adverse events immediately.

CDC has also developed a smartphone tool called [v-safe](#). Facility residents with smartphones have the option to use this tool to tell CDC if they have any side effects after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. If residents report serious side effects, someone from CDC will call to follow up.

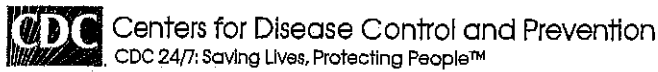


Q. Can residents' family members and loved ones receive COVID-19 vaccine through the Pharmacy Partnership Program for Long-Term Care?

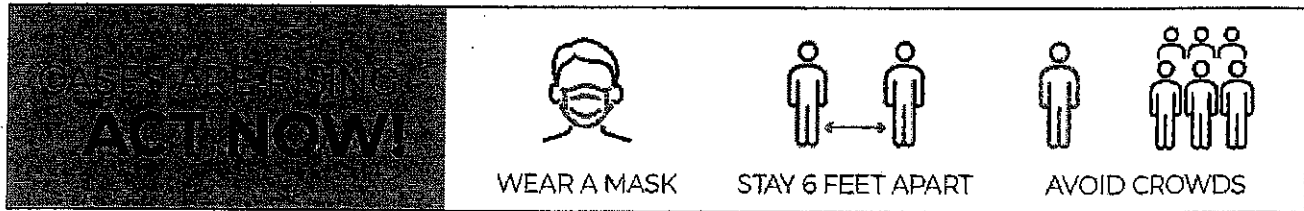
No. On-site clinics through the Pharmacy Partnership Program will vaccinate residents and staff of LTCFs. Residents' families or loved ones are not eligible for this program.

Q. Will cost be a barrier to receiving COVID-19 vaccine?

No. There is no cost associated with COVID-19 vaccine for recipients. Vaccination providers will be able to charge an administration fee for giving the vaccine, but this fee will be reimbursed by the patient's public or private health insurance or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.



COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease)

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Importance of COVID-19 Vaccination for Residents of Long-term Care Facilities

Updated Dec. 13, 2020 [Print](#)

Based on recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), an independent panel of medical and public health experts, CDC recommends residents of long-term care facilities be included among those offered the first supply of COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccinating LTCF residents will save lives

Making sure LTCF residents can receive COVID-19 vaccination as soon as vaccines are available will help save the lives of those who are most at risk of dying from COVID-19. According to ACIP's recommendations, long-term care facility residents include adults who reside in facilities that provide a range of services, including medical and personal care, to persons who are unable to live independently. The communal nature of LTCFs and the population served (generally older adults often with underlying medical conditions) puts facility residents at increased risk of infection and severe illness from COVID-19. By November 6, 2020, approximately 569,000–616,000 COVID-19 cases and 91,500 deaths were reported among LTCF residents and staff members in the United States, accounting for 39% of deaths nationwide.

Benefits of vaccination believed to outweigh possible risks

All COVID-19 vaccines were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they meet safety standards and protect adults of different races, ethnicities, and ages, including adults over the age of 65. There were no serious safety concerns. The most common side effects were pain at the injection site and signs and symptoms like fever and chills. After a review of all the available information, ACIP and CDC agreed the lifesaving benefits of COVID-19 vaccination for LTCF residents outweigh the risks of possible side effects.

The safety of COVID-19 vaccines is a top priority

To help make important unapproved medical products, including vaccines, available quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can use what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) . Before any vaccine can be authorized for use under an EUA, FDA must determine that the vaccine's benefits outweigh possible risks.

Once people begin receiving COVID-19 vaccinations, CDC and FDA will monitor vaccine safety closely. The United States will use existing robust systems and data sources to conduct ongoing safety monitoring. An additional layer of safety monitoring has also been added that allows CDC and FDA to evaluate COVID-19 vaccine safety almost immediately. Learn more about COVID-19 vaccine safety monitoring.

For LTCFs in particular, CDC will work with pharmacies and other partners to report possible side effects (called adverse events) to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) [\[7\]](#). Facility staff and residents' families are encouraged to also report any adverse events immediately.

CDC will work with pharmacies and other partners to provide communication materials to help LTCFs educate residents and their families about the vaccine, answer their questions about vaccine safety and other issues, and prepare them for vaccination clinics. For some COVID-19 vaccines, two shots are needed to provide the best protection, and the shots are given several weeks apart. Each recipient or caregiver will receive a vaccination record card to ensure they receive the correct vaccine for the second dose.

Risks and benefits will be explained to everyone offered a COVID-19 vaccination

Explaining the risks and benefits of any treatments to a patient in a way that they understand is the standard of care. In LTCFs, consent or assent for vaccination should be obtained from residents (or the person appointed to make medical decisions on their behalf) and documented in the resident's chart per standard practice.

For LTCFs participating in the Federal Pharmacy Partnership for Long-term Care Program, pharmacies will work directly with LTCFs to ensure staff and residents who receive the vaccine also receive an EUA fact sheet before vaccination. The EUA fact sheet explains the risks and benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine they are receiving and what to expect. Each LTCF resident's medical chart must note that this information was provided to the resident. If a resident is unable to make medical decisions due to decreased mental capacity or illness, the EUA fact sheet will be provided to the person appointed to make medical decisions on their behalf (the medical proxy or power of attorney).

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Content source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases