

ULSTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

COVID-19 VACCINE - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Revised on 01.14.21

Note: the content contained herein is for informational purposes only and should not be construed as, or substituted for, professional medical advice. All questions and concerns about vaccinations, and health conditions, should be discussed with your licensed health care provider.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines that are current available safe?

The current COVID-19 vaccines available from both Pfizer and Moderna have undergone scientifically rigorous and proven clinical trials involving diverse populations consisting of tens of thousands of volunteers. In all the trials, no serious side effects have been identified and both vaccines have met and exceeded 94% effectiveness. The Federal Drug Administration has granted emergency authorization for both vaccines and here in New York a COVID-19 Clinical Advisory Task Force has conducted an independent safety review.

If I have had allergic reactions to vaccines, can I still safely get a COVID-19 vaccination?

The latest advisory from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that people who have experienced severe reactions to prior vaccines or injectable drugs can still get the two approved vaccines for Covid-19, but should discuss the risks beforehand with their doctor and be monitored for 30 minutes after getting vaccinated. Please discuss any concerns or questions you may have with your health care provider.

I am pregnant or have underlying health conditions that have compromised my immune system. Is it safe to get a COVID vaccine and will it still be effective?

The COVID vaccine trials have excluded particularly high-risk or vulnerable populations such as pregnant women, and the immunocompromised however subsequent studies are already underway to determine whether the COVID vaccines are effective and appropriate for these groups. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists says it “recommends that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant individuals”, however it does not say that pregnant women should get it. If you are pregnant or are in one of these groups, you

should discuss this question further with your doctor. Also, by the time you become eligible more definitive information may be available to help guide your decision.

Can children get the COVID-19 vaccines?

At this time, children under age 18 in New York State cannot get the vaccines. Ongoing research is taking place regarding the safety and efficacy of administering COVID vaccines to persons under 18.

Are the COVID-10 vaccines available now in New York?

New York State has already administered nearly 1 million first doses of vaccine. Additional vaccine supplies are arriving weekly and new vaccine administration sites are opening every day across NYS. However, **vaccine supplies are still very limited, and your eligibility does not mean that you will get an immediate appointment.** You can register to find out when you will become eligible to get vaccinated when vaccine supplies and appointments become available in our area, by clicking [here](#) and filling out the online form.

Phase 1A (currently in progress)

Eligible New Yorkers in Phase 1A are:

- High-risk hospital workers (emergency room workers, ICU staff and Pulmonary Department staff)
- Residents and staff at nursing homes and other congregate care facilities
- Federally Qualified Health Center employees
- EMS workers
- Coroners, medical examiners and certain funeral workers
- Staff and residents at OPWDD, OMH and OASAS facilities
- Urgent Care providers
- Individuals administering COVID-19 vaccines, including local health department staff
- All Outpatient/Ambulatory front-line, high-risk health care workers of any age who provide direct in-person patient care
- All staff who are in direct contact with patients (i.e., intake staff)

- All front-line, high-risk public health workers who have direct contact with patients, including those conducting COVID-19 tests, handling COVID-19 specimens and COVID-19 vaccinations

This includes, but is not limited to,

- Doctors who work in private medical practices and their staff
- Doctors who work in hospital-affiliated medical practices and their staff
- Doctors who work in public health clinics and their staff
- Registered Nurses
- Specialty medical practices of all types
- Dentists and Orthodontists and their staff
- Psychiatrists and Psychologists and their staff
- Physical Therapists and their staff
- Optometrists and their staff
- Pharmacists and Pharmacy Aides
- Home care workers
- Hospice workers
- Staff of nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities who did not receive COVID vaccination through the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program

Phase 1B (begins on Jan. 11, along with 1A)

Along with ongoing vaccinations for the health care sector, New York will move to Phase 1B of the distribution, which will include:

- Teachers and education workers
- First responders
- Public safety workers
- Public transit workers
- People 65 and older

Phase 2: All other essential workers.

Phase 3: Healthy adults and children 18 years of age and older.

Is Ulster County compiling a waiting list of who can get the vaccination, by when?

At this time, no waiting list had been established other than to direct available vaccines to high risk and high priority populations, as determined by New York State Department of Health guidelines. Check this website regularly for further information:

<https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>

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Ulster County Department of Health will be continuously announcing when and where vaccinations for the general public become available, and who is eligible to get them

If I've already had COVID-19 and recovered do I still need to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it's available?

Yes. CDC recommends that you get vaccinated even if you have already had COVID-19, because you can catch it more than once. While you may have some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, we don't know how long this protection will last. Please check with your doctor for further information.

Do I need to avoid close contact with others and wear a mask after I've received 2 doses of the COVID vaccine?

Yes. While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to us to help stop this pandemic, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations for how to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.

What percentage of the population needs to be vaccinated in order to achieve ‘herd immunity’?

“Herd immunity” is a term used to describe when enough people have protection—either from previous infection or vaccination—that it is unlikely a virus or bacteria can spread and cause disease. As a result, everyone within the community is protected even if some people don’t have any protection themselves.

Initial estimates from the World Health Organization indicated that at least 70% of a given population would have to be vaccinated in order to achieve “herd immunity”. However, many scientists, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, have revised the initial estimate upward to the 70 to 90% range. The bottom line is that the more people who get vaccinated in a community, the greater the chances are of diminishing the spread of the disease to the point where it can be managed and no longer presents a public health crisis.

Are the COVID vaccines free?

Yes, the vaccines are, and will continue to be, available free of charge.

Are the vaccines mandatory?

Currently, New York State is not requiring mandatory vaccinations.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO CONTINUE TO PRACTICE WEARING FACE COVERINGS, MAINTAINING SOCIAL DISTANCE, AVOIDING LARGE GATHERINGS AND FREQUENT HAND WASHING BEFORE AND AFTER RECEIVING A COVID VACCINE. THIS VIRUS WILL NOT DISAPPEAR OVERNIGHT AND WE NEED TO UTILIZE ALL OF THE TOOLS TO CONTINUE TO PROTECT EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT ANY OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION PLEASE DISCUSS WITH YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE TAKING ACTION – AND CONTINUE TO CONSULT ON ANY AND ALL SUBSEQUENT CONCERNS.