



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - THE COVID-19 VACCINE

January 20, 2021

### **Why is the COVID-19 vaccine important for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities?**

From the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities:

“Infectious disease experts say most cases of COVID-19 are mild to moderate, like the common cold. But people with developmental disabilities and the people who care for them can be more at risk. That is why it is especially important to take extra precautions both to stay well and stop the spread of the virus.”

OPWDD Commissioner Theodore Kastner:

“I would like to emphasize that the more people who are offered the vaccine and choose to take it, the better the public health outcome will be. As valued members of our OPWDD community, I appeal to each and every one of you to help educate others about the importance of vaccination and do your part to encourage widespread vaccination.”

### **What vaccines are available to help prevent COVID-19?**

Currently the FDA has granted emergency use authorization to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Other vaccines are in the process of obtaining FDA approval and will soon be available.

### **Who is eligible for the vaccine?**

New York State has deployed a [phased distribution plan](#). People become eligible in phases and the list of people eligible changes often. The best way to find out if you are eligible is to go to the New York State “Am I Eligible” tool: <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>

### **Where is the best place to find and share information about COVID-19 and the Vaccine?**

New York State, the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, and the CDC are the go-to entities for information about the vaccine program in our area. Some important resources include:

- Plain Language documents: <https://opwdd.ny.gov/coronavirus-guidance/covid-19-vaccine>
- Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgJ\\_PRC3fmg&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgJ_PRC3fmg&feature=youtu.be)
- Covid Vaccine Phased Distribution Plan: <https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/phased-distribution-vaccine>

- CDC Covid Vaccine FAQ: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- New York State COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline: 1-833-697-4829
- Our website: <https://personcenteredservices.com>
- Your Care Coordinator

### **What can a Care Coordinator do to help an individual with the vaccine?**

Once a person is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, a Care Coordinator can assist with:

- Scheduling a vaccine appointment
- Transportation to the appointment
- Helping with getting the second dose

### **What do individuals need to bring to a Vaccine Appointment?**

- If living in certified setting, the staff at those entities will help people complete the consent required for the vaccine.
- There is a special consent from DOH: “Covid-19 Immunization Screening and Consent Form” : <https://on.ny.gov/35Ce77t>
- Each dose will require a consent (2 doses = 2 consents)
- People living in the community will need to complete a consent requested by the vaccinating entity.
- OPWDD is developing a plan to address obtaining informed consent for people living in non-certified settings.
- Check with the vaccinating entity to see if ID or anything else is required

### **What happens after I get the vaccine?**

You will need another dose of the vaccine. While you are at the vaccination site you will need to make an appointment for the second dose. The second dose would need to be within 28 days for the Moderna vaccine and 21 days for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

You will need a second set of consents for the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose.

### **Is the vaccine safe?**

According to both the CDC and the New York State Department of Health, the U.S. has a robust vaccine safety system in place to ensure that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Safety is always closely monitored during clinical trials of vaccine candidates. After a vaccine is authorized or approved for use by the FDA, many vaccine safety monitoring systems watch for adverse events (possible side effects). This ongoing monitoring can pick up on adverse events that may not have been seen in clinical trials. If an unexpected adverse event is seen, experts quickly study it further to see if it is a true safety concern. Experts then decide whether changes are needed in U.S. vaccine recommendations.

In New York State, an added level of review was established to help ensure the safety of any COVID-19 vaccine. Experts on New York State's independent COVID-19 Clinical Advisory Task Force will thoroughly review all vaccine research before recommending a vaccine to New

Yorkers. This review occurs concurrently with the FDA's own review process to ensure a comprehensive review, but one that does not slow down the distribution process.

Vaccine development for coronavirus infection began in 2002 with the SARS outbreak, so this is not a new development. Once the genetic sequence of the virus was determined, the current technologies allowed for rapid development and testing. The vaccines do not have full FDA approval, but have been approved under the emergency use authorization. The science and safety aspects are not “rushed.” The safety profiles of these vaccines are better than, or at least equal to many vaccines, that have been on the market for years.

Based on the information we have reviewed from the CDC, New York State Department of Health, and how vaccines are developed in general, the data shows it is a safe and effective method of curtailing the virus over the next few months, but ultimately the decision is yours to make, in consultation with your personal health-care provider.

### **How do we locate sites where the vaccine is being given?**

There are lists of places identified by New York State as vaccine distribution sites, and they are listed [here on Roots](#) for Care Coordinators to download and share. However, the availability of the vaccine changes day to day and appointments are necessary, so checking with the actual location will be important.

### **Will there be special accommodations for people with I/DD to receive the vaccine?**

It is unclear if special accommodations at some vaccination sites will be available. It is important to call the vaccination site ahead of time to inquire. If we hear of any sites providing special accommodations, we will share that information as soon as possible.

### **Can a family member or other caregiver accompany someone to get the vaccine?**

Each site offering the vaccine has different rules. It is important to check with the site and ask about their specific policy.

### **Who should NOT get the Vaccine?**

You should NOT get the vaccine if:

- You have a history of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any component of the vaccine.
- You are currently having symptoms of COVID-19
- Immunocompromised persons, including individuals receiving immunosuppressant therapy, may have a diminished immune response, but may still be vaccinated. You should check with your doctor if you are immunocompromised and wish to receive the vaccine.

### **Are there other medical conditions or diagnoses that disqualify someone from getting the vaccine?**

If there are any medical concerns you should first check with your Primary Care Physician. The vaccinating entity will also screen for medical issues that may not be appropriate to get the vaccine, but before scheduling or anything, it is best to check with your doctor.

### **What if I already had COVID-19?**

The fact that re-infection of COVID-19 is possible people who have had COVID-19 should still be vaccinated after the acute infection has resolved. Generally speaking, the vaccine can be administered 14 days after infection, but up to 90 days after. Data suggests that protective antibodies persist for at least 90 days after infection.

### **What if I am pregnant, breast feeding, or considering pregnancy?**

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant individuals who meet criteria for vaccination based on ACIP (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) recommended priority groups, which includes health care personnel. COVID-19 vaccines should be offered to lactating individuals similar to non-lactating individuals in the priority groups. While a conversation with a clinician may be helpful, it should not be required prior to vaccination, as this may cause unnecessary barriers to access. Additionally, the vaccine does not cause infertility as reported on social media.

Available data suggest that symptomatic pregnant patients with COVID-19 are at increased risk of more severe illness compared with nonpregnant peers.

### **Do I still need to wear a mask if I get the vaccine?**

Yes, the CDC recommends that during the pandemic people wear masks that cover their nose and mouth when in contact with others outside your household, when in health care facilities and when receiving the vaccine. There is still a lot more to learn and understand about the protection that the COVID-19 vaccines provide. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in the community will also affect this decision.

### **Who is paying for the vaccine?**

According to the CDC, vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars and administered in 2020 and 2021 will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccination providers will be able to charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Vaccine providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.