Sun River Health

COVID-19 Vaccine Patient FAQ

Please note: *Due to the rapid pace of vaccine-related developments, information is being constantly updated. Please check back for more information. Please also refer to* ***https://forward.ny.gov/covid-19-vaccine-distribution.***

Why should I receive a COVID-19 vaccination?
The reason to get vaccinated is to boost your immune system from contracting COVID-19. All the vaccines have been approved for emergency useby the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The vaccine, combined with social distancing and masking is the best way to fully move ourselves, our communities, and our nation beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

When most of a population is immune to an infectious disease, this provides indirect protection, called “herd immunity,” to those who are not immune to the disease or who are unable to get vaccinated due to a compromised immune system or severe allergy to a specific vaccine ingredient. Scientists estimate that over 70% of the population will need to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity.

COVID-19 has caused very serious illness and even death many in our country and around the world. If you get COVID-19, you also risk giving it to loved ones who may get very sick. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a safe choice to protect you and those in your home.

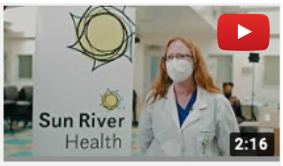
How do I know that the COVID-19 vaccination is real or reliable?
The COVID-19 vaccine was developed and tested in large clinical trials (tests) to make sure it meets safety standards established and enforced by FDA and endorsed by the CDC and the NIH.

Many people of different ages, races, and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions, participated in these clinical trials. The FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine to make sure even very rare side effects are identified and made public.

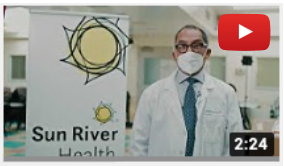
Several Sun River Health clinicians and other staff have given short interviews on why they believe the vaccine is important, viewable here:

Sharon Andrades, RN on the COVID-19 Vaccine

Dolores Curbelo, MD on the COVID-19 Vaccine



Roberta Kelly on the COVID-19 Vaccine



Kenneth Desa, MD on the COVID-19 Vaccine

Ivanette Juarbe-Ramos, MD on the COVID Vaccine

How does the vaccine work?
Vaccines work by triggering your immune system to recognize and fight off the viruses they target. By triggering your immune system to respond to a virus, the vaccine helps your body to destroy the virus if you are exposed to COVID-19 in the future.

For a detailed graphic on how the vaccine works, **click here**.

What if I have already had COVID-19, do I still need to be vaccinated?
Yes, vaccination is still important. Reinfection with COVID19 is possible. Experts do not know how long immunity will last after COVID infection. It is recommended to be vaccinated for COVID-19 even if you had COVID-19. Vaccination is a critical part of our public health response to ending the Pandemic.

Right now, the data suggest that protection after natural infection may only last 2-3 months in some people. Current data from the vaccine tests also suggests that immunity from the vaccine immunity may be stronger and longer lasting.

After I receive a vaccination, do I still need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others?
Yes, it will be important for everyone to continue to follow the CDC's recommendations of covering their mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least six feet away from others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following these recommendations offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.

What about the new strain of COVID-19? Does the vaccine work against this new strain?
Viruses are always changing and evolving, and vaccines are designed to account for these changes. At present scientists believe the vaccine will be effective against this new strain. There is currently no evidence that the new strain of COVID-19 will impact the effectiveness of the vaccines being distributed now.

When will Sun River Health receive the vaccines?
Sun River Health staff who see patients began to receive the vaccine the week of December 21st, 2020. For information on availability to others, see below.

When can my family and I receive the vaccine?
At this time, everyone aged 16 and up can make an appointment to get the COVID-19 vaccine in New York State.

Will I have to pay to receive the vaccine, or is it free?
At this time, all COVID-19 vaccinations in the U.S. will be at no cost to patients.

If you do not have health insurance, there will be no charge if your only reason for coming into the health center is to receive the vaccine.

If you are uninsured and are coming in for another reason but ask to get the vaccine as part your visit, you will be charged for your visit according to our sliding fee scale.

What side effects will I experience from the COVID-19 vaccination?
Most people do not have serious problems after being vaccinated. However, your arm may be sore, red, or warm to the touch right after. Some people report getting a headache, fever, or other flu-like symptoms after getting the vaccine. These side effects are a sign that your immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to do and usually go away within 1-2 days. Taking Ibuprofen or Tylenol can also help with these symptoms.

What allergic reactions to the vaccine have been identified?
The only allergic reaction identified to the vaccine at this time are people with a history of anaphylaxis. Vaccine providers will observe patients after vaccination to monitor for the occurrence of immediate adverse reactions. People with a history of anaphylaxis will be observed for 30 minutes following administration of vaccines. Everyone else will be observed for 15 minutes following administration of vaccines.

For more information from the CDC on allergic reactions, click **here**.

What does emergency use authorization mean? What's the difference between emergency use authorization and full authorization?

From the CDC Covid-19 FAQ:
In certain types of emergencies, the FDA can issue an emergency use authorization, or EUA, to provide more timely access to critical medical products (including medicines and tests) that may help during the emergency when there are no adequate, approved, and available alternative options.

The EUA process is different than FDA approval, clearance, or licensing because the EUA standard may permit authorization based on significantly less data than would be required for approval, clearance, or licensing by the FDA. This enables the FDA to authorize the emergency use of medical products that meet the criteria within weeks rather than months to years.

EUAs are in effect until the emergency declaration ends but can be revised or revoked as we evaluate the needs during the emergency and new data on the product's safety and effectiveness, or as products meet the criteria to become approved, cleared, or licensed by the FDA.

Will I be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am sick or not feeling well?
If you are sick or not feeling well, you will not be eligible to receive the vaccine. Please consult your doctor if you have additional questions.

Is there anyone who should not receive the vaccine?
Before you are vaccinated, you will be evaluated to see if there are reasons you should not receive the vaccination.

Do I really need to receive more than one dose of the vaccine?
Yes. Receiving both doses of the vaccine is the only way to protect yourself from COVID-19. The second Pfizer dose is given 21 days after the first dose. The second Moderna dose is given 28 days after the first dose.

Your appointment for your second dose will be given when you receive your first vaccination. If you miss your second dose, you should call your doctor to discuss what you should do.

If I get the COVID-19 vaccine, do I still need to get a flu shot?
Yes, it is extremely important that you get your regular flu shot as well. You should continue to receive all other vaccines to stay healthy and prevent the spread of illness.

Please note that the flu shot and the COVID-19 vaccine must be taken 14 days apart.

How long will my COVID-19 immunity last after I get my vaccination?
It is unknown how long immunity will last at this time. It is important to continue wearing a mask and social distancing until further notice even after you are vaccinated.

Can the vaccine cause COVID-19?
No. None of the vaccines currently in development in the U.S., use the live virus that causes COVID-19.

After receiving the vaccine, you may experience a headache, fever, or other flu-like symptoms. These side effects are a sign that your immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to do and usually go away within 1-2 days. Taking Ibuprofen or Tylenol can also help with these symptoms.

Will there be enough COVID-19 vaccine for everyone who wants to be vaccinated?
At the present time there is limited supply, but over time we anticipate an increased supply of the vaccines.

Can side effects from the vaccine occur not until the day after someone gets it?
Side effects are minimal, with most people noticing slight pain and swelling at the site of injection, slight headache, low grade fever, and myalgias. These all usually occur within 24 hours of getting the vaccine.

I have had to use a nebulizer over the last a few days due to asthma. Can the vaccine still be taken?
Yes.

Can you share data on how well the vaccine works? Do vaccines work best when 75% of the population are vaccinated?
The vaccine is approximately 52% effective two weeks after the first dose, and 94% effective two weeks after the second dose. Herd immunity is variable and depends on the virus, the population, and the strain. Currently, the belief is that 75% of the population needs to be vaccinated for herd immunity from this virus, though this may change as more data is reviewed. The recommendation is that everyone eligible should be vaccinated.

Did the vaccine studies include people of diverse races and ethnicities?
Yes.

Does actively using drugs and or drinking affect the vaccine?
There is no reason to believe that there is any different response to the vaccine.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine a one-time event or something that will be required annually like the flu vaccine?
We do not know currently. As more data comes out, we will have a better idea.

If you take the vaccine, can you still spread COVID-19 if you are exposed, even if you don't show symptoms or test positive?
There is some evidence that the virus can still be carried by a vaccinated individual. Even though the virus will not make them sick, that person may transmit it to unvaccinated people. Vaccinated individuals should continue social distancing and wearing masks to reduce this risk.

What are the major differences between the vaccines?
All the COVID-19 vaccines are mRNA vaccines and very similar. The only difference is that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are given in two doses and the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is one dose.

Does the vaccine interfere with mental health medications?
We don't believe so, but no formal studies have been done yet.

Is there any information on Bell's palsy side effects from the vaccine?
This is extremely rare. Bell's palsy side effects are more common due to other causes, such as HSV or Lyme disease.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine recommended for HIV positive individuals? If so, when will it be available to them?
Yes, the vaccine is recommended for HIV positive individuals. We are awaiting state guidance on when it may be administered to this group.

Is it recommended to check immunity after the completion of the second dose of the vaccine to ensure there are antibodies?
Currently, this is not recommended as most labs do not show a level of immunity, but rather just if antibodies are present or absent.

Is it true that the vaccine could change or have a negative effect on someone's DNA?
This is incorrect. mRNA vaccines do not get incorporated into your DNA.

What can be attributed to the speed in which this vaccine was developed? Was it already being developed pre-COVID-19 to address other viruses, or was this sheer will and mobilization due to the urgency?
Improved technology and multiple labs working on vaccine platforms for other viruses, such as HIV, were able to pivot to this virus quickly. Huge amounts of money were paid to the vaccine companies to start production immediately, so the vaccine supply was available once data showed that the vaccine worked.

Has New York State mentioned that if you get the vaccine will you be permitted to travel out of state without having to quarantine when you return?
No state or nation has provided guidance on that yet.

Can having had COVID-19 in the past cause you to have a more severe reaction to the vaccine?
There is no evidence of this.

Is there a risk of running out of the vaccine supply to get the second dose, or is it guaranteed if the first dose was given?
The second doses will be received from the state. We have been following the state's guidelines to administer the first dose without waiting for the second.

When do we think we will have open vaccinations for younger people with underlying conditions?
This will depend on vaccine availability and uptake among the currently eligible groups. Once the demand in this group has been met, the state will provide us with guidance on expansion to other groups

Is the vaccine recommended to children under the age of 10?
No, not currently.

Since this is an mRNA vaccine, what happens to mRNA after the protein is made? Does it stay?
mRNA has a short lifespan and decomposes very rapidly.