DHCS COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Beneficiary FAQS
January 25, 2023

With the federal approval of COVID-19 vaccines, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) will provide the vaccine at no cost to all Californians.

DHCS has been following California's COVID-19 vaccination plan, which was approved by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). For further information on the state's vaccination planning efforts please visit https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/.

California is leveraging its existing immunization framework and emergency response infrastructure to coordinate efforts among state, local, and territorial authorities to administer the vaccine. Throughout this effort, DHCS will share appropriate information with you and our providers, health plan partners, counties, and other key stakeholders.

To address beneficiary inquiries regarding the COVID-19 vaccination in Medi-Cal, these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have been developed.

For further information on the state's vaccination planning efforts please visit https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/.

1. What individuals are covered to get the vaccine?
2. Will individuals have to pay for the vaccine?
3. Where can individuals get the vaccine?
4. When can individuals get the vaccine?
5. Will individuals be able to get transportation to the get their vaccine if needed?
6. Can homebound individuals get the vaccine?
7. Is the vaccine safe?
8. What does Emergency Use Authorization mean for a vaccine?
9. Have any COVID-19 vaccines receive FDA Approval?
10. What does FDA approval mean? Is a vaccine that is FDA approved safer than others that only have a EUA?
11. How will safety be tracked once a COVID-19 vaccine is made available to the public?
12. Is the vaccine helpful? I heard getting COVID-19 gives you better and longer immunity than the protection a vaccine can give. Can it actually make my illness worse if I do end up getting COVID-19?
13. Are there side effects associated with the vaccine?
14. Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?
15. Will there be any long-term side effects?
16. Do I need to get a booster shot?
17. If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with the vaccine?
18. Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received 2 doses of the vaccine?
19. What is the risk of children getting sick with COVID-19?
20. Can my child get a COVID-19 vaccine? What about a booster?
21. Can I take the COVID vaccine and the flu vaccine (or another vaccine) at the same time?
22. How long does it take to be protected after vaccination?
23. If I have previously tested positive for COVID-19, can I still get the vaccine?
24. Who can I contact for more information?

1. **What individuals are covered to get the vaccine?**

   A. All Californians can receive the vaccine at no cost.

2. **Will individuals have to pay for the vaccine?**

   A. No. The vaccine is being purchased by the federal government and will be provided to individuals at no cost, regardless of existing health coverage or type of coverage.

3. **Where can individuals get the vaccine?**

   A. Pharmacies, retail clinics, providers (including those enrolled in managed care plans), and any other sites of care receiving and administering COVID-19 vaccinations.

   Additional information can be found on the CDPH website: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/COVID-19Vaccine.aspx

   The "My Turn" website can be used to schedule appointments.

   Additional information can be found at: https://myturn.ca.gov/

4. **When can individuals get the vaccine?**

   A. Currently, vaccines may be given to every Californian age 6 months and older.

   For more information go to: https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/
   https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/VaccineAllocationGuidelines.aspx

   The "My Turn" website tells Californians if they or their minors qualify to get the COVID vaccine and can be used to schedule appointments.

   Additional information can be found here: https://myturn.ca.gov/

   Individuals can also use the CDC's Vaccine website to book an appointment or find a walk-in site.

   Additional information can be found here: https://www.vaccines.gov/search/

5. **Will individuals be able to get transportation to the get their vaccine if needed?**

   A. For Medi-Cal managed care plan members:

   Yes. Members can call their managed care plan for assistance with booking a vaccine appointment and arranging transportation to that appointment. They are to assist in coordination of vaccine services and transportation as needed.

The My Turn request center will have a check box asking if the individual needs transportation to a vaccine appointment. If the individual checks this box, they will be notified that they will receive a call to schedule their vaccine appointment.

A customer service representative (representative) from the California COVID-19 Vaccination Services Information Line call center (call center) will contact the individual. If the individual needs transportation and has Medi-Cal, and is enrolled in a managed care plan, the call center representative will schedule their vaccine appointment and connect them to their managed care plan for transportation coordination

B. For Medi-Cal Fee-for-Service beneficiaries:

Yes. My Turn books the vaccine appointment (at least 5 business days after the call in order to provide time for transportation arrangement) and then provides the member with contact information to schedule their Medi-Cal Fee-for-Service transportation. For Non-Medical Transportation (persons who do not need assistance ambulating), Fee-for-Service beneficiaries (or the Call Center) can call any of the providers on the below list of approved Non-Medical Transportation providers, or send an email to DHCSNMT@dhcs.ca.gov.

Link to approved Non-Medical Transportation providers
https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Documents/List-of-Approved-Nonmedical-Transportation-Providers.pdf

For Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (non-ambulatory patients), beneficiaries normally work with their medical provider, who can prescribe Non-Emergency Medical Transportation and put them in touch with a transportation provider to coordinate their ride to and from their appointment. The San Diego DHCS Field Office can also assist by providing a list of Non-Emergency Medical Transportation providers by location. The San Diego Field Office may be reached at (858) 495-3666.

Additional information can be found here: https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/Transportation.aspx

6. **Can homebound individuals get the vaccine?**

A. For Medi-Cal managed care plan members:

Yes. After the managed care plan has connected with a member who requests the in-home vaccination, they are to refer the member to the MyTurn appointment system, and then instruct the member to book their appointment and check the appropriate box for in-home vaccination.

The My Turn request center will have a check box asking if the individual is homebound and is unable to leave their home due to limited mobility or fragile health and need a vaccine in their home. If the individual checks this box, the call center representative will provide the individual's Information to the Local Health Department. The Local Health Department will then arrange for a medical team to visit the individual at home to vaccinate the individual and any family members.

A customer service representative (representative) from the California COVID-19 Vaccination Services Information Line call center (call center) will contact the individual.

B. For Medi-Cal Fee-for-Service (FFS) beneficiaries:

Yes. The My Turn request center will have a check box asking if the individual needs transportation to a vaccine appointment, or is homebound and is unable to leave their home due to limited mobility or fragile health and need a vaccine in their home. If the individual checks this box, they will be notified that they will receive a call to schedule their vaccine appointment.

A customer service representative (representative) from the California COVID-19 Vaccination Services Information Line call center (call center) will contact the individual.

7. **Is the vaccine safe?**

A. COVID-19 vaccines were tested in large clinical trials to make sure they meet safety standards. Many people were recruited to participate in these trials to see how the vaccines offer protection to people of different ages, races, and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has reviewed the vaccines for their safety and effectiveness before granting FDA approval or Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for their use. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and its Advisory Committee for Immunizations (ACIP) has also reviewed the safety information of the approved vaccines.

In addition, California formed a Scientific Safety Review Work Group to independently review the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. Based on all these reviews, the vaccine is considered safe for use in Californians. Please refer to the CDPH COVID 19 Questions and Answers page for additional details.

FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines to make sure even very rare side effects are identified. Health care providers are required to report certain adverse events following vaccination to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

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CDC is also implementing a new smartphone-based tool called v-safe to check in on people's health after they receive a COVID-19 vaccine. When you receive your vaccine, you should also receive a v-safe information sheet telling you how to enroll in v-safe. If you enroll, you will receive regular text messages directing you to surveys where you can report any problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

For more information regarding safety considerations for COVID-19 vaccines, please visit the "Safety" section of: Clinical Guidance for COVID-19 Vaccination | CDC

Additional information can be found here: https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/
https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx

8. **What does Emergency Use Authorization mean for a vaccine?**

A. In certain types of emergencies, such as with the current public health emergency, the FDA can issue an emergency use authorization, or EUA, to provide more timely access to critical medical products that may help during the emergency when there are no adequate, approved, and available alternative options.

Under the EUA authority, the FDA evaluates requests for authorization very quickly using the evidence that is available, carefully balancing the risks and benefits of the product as we know them, in addition to evaluating other criteria. EUAs are in effect until the emergency declaration ends but can be revised or revoked as needs change during the emergency, or as products meet the criteria to become approved, cleared, or licensed by the FDA.

Additional information can be found here: https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/ and CDPH COVID-19: Information for Laboratories

9. **Have any COVID-19 vaccines receive FDA Approval?**

Yes. For the latest information on FDA-approval of COVID-19 vaccines, please visit: COVID-19 Vaccines | FDA

10. **What does FDA approval mean? Is a vaccine that is FDA approved safer than others that only have a EUA?**

A. Vaccines that are FDA-approved are vaccines that have undergone extensive, well-documented, checks for quality, safety, and effectiveness. Data-driven tests and evaluations have been performed and assessed multiple times before the FDA approves a vaccine. An FDA-approval should make you feel more comfortable that the vaccine has been vetted through a rigorous process and is safe. Vaccines that have received EUAs, but not full FDA approval, are still being formally reviewed by the FDA. However, when an EUA is granted to a vaccine, it means the FDA feels very confident in the safety characterized by the data, tests, and effectiveness that have been submitted so far, but may still be evaluating other criteria and risks before granting full approval. The EUA means the FDA feels confident in the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines, and believes it is safer to get vaccinated rather than not and risk contracting COVID-19.

11. **How will safety be tracked once a COVID-19 vaccine is made available to the public?**

A. After a vaccine is approved for use via Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), scientists and health professionals will continue to carefully monitor its use. The Vaccine Safety Datalink in the United States, which monitors many immunizations in California, is designed to report a safety problem in near real time so the public can be informed quickly of possible risks. Health care providers are required to report certain adverse events following vaccination to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

When you receive your vaccine, you will also receive an information sheet telling you how to enroll in a program called v-safe that allows you to report problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine to the Centers For Disease Control (CDC). Additionally, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and CDC will continue to carefully monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines to make sure that even very rare side effects are identified as early as possible. These are some of the ways that will help detect previously undetected issues related to the vaccines as early as possible.
For more information regarding safety considerations for COVID-19 vaccines, please visit the "Safety" section of: Clinical Guidance for COVID-19 Vaccination | CDC

12. **Is the vaccine helpful? I heard getting COVID-19 gives you better and longer immunity than the protection a vaccine can give.**

   A. COVID-19 vaccines prevent you from getting sick from COVID-19. Studies continue to show that vaccination lowers the risk of severe illness and of developing long COVID. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a safer choice.

   Additional information can be found here: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx

   Further information regarding safety, efficacy, and recommendations for the vaccine can be found at https://www.vaccinateall58.com/ and https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Covid19Vaccines.aspx.

13. **Are there side effects associated with the vaccine?**

   A. Most people do not have serious problems after being vaccinated for COVID-19. Any minor symptoms usually go away on their own within a week. Providers will provide information and explain any potential side effects that can be expected with vaccination.

   Additional information can be found here: https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/

14. **Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?**

   A. No, the vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 because it does not contain infectious virus.

   Additional information can be found here: https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/.

15. **Will there be any long-term side effects?**

   A. COVID-19 vaccines are being tested in large clinical trials to assess their safety. However, it does take time, and more people will need to be vaccinated before we learn about very rare or long-term side effects. That is why safety monitoring will continue. The CDC has an independent group of experts that reviews all the safety data and provides regular safety updates. If a safety issue is detected, immediate action will be taken to determine if the issue is related to the COVID-19 vaccine and determine the best course of action.

16. **Do I need to get a booster shot?**

   For the latest information on who can get a booster shot, please visit: COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shots | CDC.

Moderately or Severely Immunocompromised People

For the latest information on additional primary shots and booster shots for some immunocompromised people, please visit: COVID-19 Vaccines for Moderately or Severely Immunocompromised People | CDC

Additional information can be found here: https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/ and https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html

17. **If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with the vaccine?**

   A. Yes. Available evidence from clinical studies shows that the vaccine is safe in persons who have had prior COVID-19 infection or who have tested positive for it, and provides additional protection against severe illness.

   Additional information can be found here: https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/

18. **Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received 2 or more doses of the vaccine?**

   A. Current California guidance around masking can be found here: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx.

19. **What is the risk of children getting sick with COVID-19?**

   A. Children can be infected and get sick with COVID-19. Most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, or they may have no symptoms at all, which is known as being asymptomatic.

   Fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared to adults. However, infants (children less than 1 year old) and children with certain underlying medical conditions might be at increased risk for COVID-19. For further information, please consult your child's health care provider.

20. **Can my child get a COVID-19 vaccine? What about a booster?**

   A. CDC recommends **everyone age 6 months and older get a COVID-19** vaccine to help protect against COVID-19**.**

      For the latest information on COVID-19 vaccines for children and teens, please visit: COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens | CDC

   CDC also recommends that **everyone 6 months and older should get a COVID-19 booster shot.**

      For the latest information on COVID-19 booster shots, please visit: COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shots | CDC

Moderately or Severely Immunocompromised Children

For the latest information on additional primary shots and booster shots for some immunocompromised people including children, please visit: [COVID-19 Vaccines for Moderately or Severely Immunocompromised People | CDC](#)

Additional information can be found here: https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/ and https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html

21. **Can I take the COVID vaccine and the flu vaccine (or another vaccine) at the same time?**

    A. Current CDC recommendations allow administration of the COVID vaccine at the same time as the flu vaccine or other vaccines.

22. **How long does it take to be protected after vaccination?**

    A. Although protection from the vaccine is not immediate, the first shot starts building protection. For vaccines that currently require a two dose series, it will take one-to-two weeks following the second dose to get the most protection the vaccine can offer. Protection can be reinforced if a third or booster dose is given, as appropriate.

23. **If I have previously tested positive for COVID-19, can I still get the vaccine?**

    A. People who have previously tested positive for or been sick with COVID-19 but have now recovered still benefit from getting vaccinated. People are advised to get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they have been sick with COVID-19 before.
    Additional information can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/faq.html

24. **Who can I contact for more information?**

    A. If you receive your care from a Medi-Cal health plan and have questions, please call your [managed care plan](#).

    For clinical questions please contact your provider.

    For all other questions please contact the Medi-Cal Member Help Line: (800) 541-5555; TTY (800) 430-7077), Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. You may also call the Medi-Nurse Advice Line: (877) 409-9052.

25. **Where do I find general California guidance on COVID-19?**

    A. There are two California websites that offer general guidance on COVID-19. These are the State of California Coronavirus Response website and the California Department of Public Health website. Check both websites frequently, as resources are regularly updated and added. Below are the web addresses of each.

- The California Coronavirus Response website is: covid19.ca.gov.
- The California Department of Public Health website is: cdph.ca.gov/COVID19
- The Centers for Disease Control website is: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/faq.html

26. What is the difference between an additional primary shot and a booster dose?

A. An additional primary shot of a COVID-19 vaccine is administered for individuals with weakened immune systems at least 28 days after the second dose of an mRNA vaccine, to help protect these individuals who may not have had a strong enough response to the first two doses. For more on why immunocompromised individuals may need to get a third dose, see the "COVID-19 Vaccines for Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised People."

A booster dose is designed to help individuals maintain their immunity for longer. For the latest information on who can get a booster shot, which booster should be administered, and when boosters should be administered, please visit: COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shots | CDC

27. Who is eligible to receive an additional primary shot?

A. For information on who is eligible to receive an additional primary shot, please visit: COVID-19 Vaccines for Moderately or Severely Immunocompromised People | CDC

Additional Resources:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/downloads/COVID-19-Vaccination-Program-Interim_Playbook.pdf

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/index.html

https://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/COVID19_response.aspx

https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/uninsured-patient-covid-services-poster.pdf

https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/uninsured-patient-covid-services-poster-spanish.pdf

https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Johnson--Johnson-COVID-19-Vaccine-Updates.aspx