QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: COVID-19 VACCINES

The following provides people living with cystic fibrosis and their families with the latest information and resources on COVID-19 vaccines. This information will be updated as the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation monitors developments to understand how these vaccinations may impact the CF community.

This is NOT medical advice. Care decisions should be based on recommendations — and the associated benefit-risk assessment of treatment options — from your CF care team and the goals and circumstances of the patients and families they serve.

BEFORE GETTING VACCINATED

What vaccines have been approved for COVID-19?

Three vaccines have received U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) emergency use authorization Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Janssen, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson (J&J). Learn more about how vaccines are evaluated for use by the FDA here.

Can I choose which vaccine to get?

As vaccine supplies have begun to match demand, people may be able to choose a vaccine site that offers their preferred vaccine.

When can I get vaccinated?

People ages 18 and older are eligible to receive the Moderna and J&J COVID-19 vaccines. People ages 12 and older are eligible to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. You can also text your zip code to 438829 (GET VAX) or visit vaccines.gov for a list of vaccine locations near you. Many local sites, including pharmacies, offer vaccinations without an appointment.

How will I know if a vaccine is safe and effective for me?

You can discuss the known benefits and risks with your doctor or care team. They can review the safety data from clinical trials and real-world use, including the potential side effects, and discuss your personal circumstances, such as your health status, employment, school, or household situation. The authorized vaccines have had relatively few reports of adverse side effects.

Data from clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines evaluated by the FDA indicate very high efficacy against symptomatic illness and against illness that caused hospitalization and death, and were consistent across groups including those at high risk. All three trials were ethnically diverse. The percentages of participants who were Black ranged from 10% to 13%, and the percentage of Hispanic participants ranged from 13% to 28%. All trials include data on people at high risk for severe illness, such as those with chronic but stable medical conditions, like high blood pressure, pulmonary disease, and diabetes. Based on these findings, there is no evidence to suggest that people with CF would respond differently from those included in the clinical trials.

Following the FDA authorization of a vaccine, the safety and efficacy are reviewed by an independent CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). This committee includes vaccine experts who use a rigorous method designed to protect the health and safety of the public. Learn more about this process further down this page under "What is the review and approval process for vaccines in the United States?"

I have CF. Can family members in my household also get vaccinated to keep me safe?

Yes. People ages 18 and older are eligible to receive the Moderna and J&J COVID-19 vaccines. People ages 12 and older are eligible to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. You can also text your zip code to 438829 (GET VAX) or visit vaccines.gov for a list of vaccine locations near you.

Until I get vaccinated, how can I stay safe?

There are many things you can do to protect your health and that of your household until a vaccine is available and, more importantly, until infection rates are reduced. Everyone — even those who have been vaccinated — should continue
doing what they can to protect their health and the health of everyone around them. Learn more about prevention and safety here.

**How much will a vaccine cost?**

Most people will be able to get a vaccine without paying out of pocket. However, in certain circumstances, you may be charged by your doctor or health care provider for giving you the shots (the cost of the vaccine itself is covered by the U.S. government). If you have questions about whether getting a COVID-19 vaccine is covered by your health insurance or about cost-sharing, call Compass at 844-COMPASS (844-266-7277).

**WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN GETTING VACCINATED**

**How many shots will it take for me to be fully vaccinated?**

Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna’s authorized vaccines require two shots. Timing between the shots does vary and should be reviewed with your doctor. It is important that you receive both shots of the same vaccine to fully benefit from the protection that the vaccine provides. The J&J vaccine requires only one shot for a person to be fully vaccinated.

**What are the side effects?**

Although side effects from the different vaccines may vary, those that have been commonly reported include pain where the shot is injected, fatigue, muscle aches, chills, and fever. These side effects usually go away within a few days and are a sign that your immune system is working. Talk to your doctor about what side effects you can expect after being vaccinated. Vaccine manufacturers and public health officials will continue to monitor side effects as the vaccines are given to the wider population. Severe allergic reactions to both vaccines are rare. However, if you have had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine or injection in the past, ask your doctor if you should get vaccinated and what you can expect, including when to contact your care team or seek medical attention should you experience a bad reaction.

**WHAT TO EXPECT AFTERWARDS**

**How long will I be protected after I am vaccinated?**

Recent research showed that both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines provide protection for at least six months after the second dose. More data are needed to determine how long the vaccine provides protection from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccine manufacturers and public health officials will continue to monitor vaccine recipients for several months to years following FDA approval. Over time, we will gain a better understanding of long-term immunity.

**Can I go back to normal activities once I’m fully vaccinated?**

The CDC has recommended that fully vaccinated people can resume many of the activities they did before the pandemic, including resuming many indoor and outdoor activities and traveling. Vaccinated people should still continue to wear masks in certain circumstances, including when they are required by local regulations or businesses and in communities where the virus is spreading rapidly. People should also wear masks if they have received a lung transplant or have another health condition that is associated with a lower immune response to vaccines, if a member of their household has a weakened immune system, if they are at increased risk for severe disease, or if a member of their household is not fully vaccinated. Learn more from the CDC.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**For people with CF and their Families:**

CF and Coronavirus (COVID-19): A section on cff.org where all COVID-19-related resources — including additional questions and answers about vaccines and how to reduce risk of contracting COVID-19 in everyday life for people with CF and their families — can be found in one place.

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