

COVID-19 vaccine frequently asked questions

How will I know when I can get a vaccine?

As a Mercyhealth patient, you will receive an email when you are eligible for the vaccine instructing you to log into your MyChart account. Once you log in, there will be a welcome notice on the main page instructing you to schedule your COVID-19 vaccine appointment. You will need to click the box to the right that says "Schedule Now."

We will expand notification through other outreach methods (mail, phone and email) as our vaccine supply allows. We cannot accept walk ins or vaccinate family members outside a given phase at this time.

You may be contacted or see other opportunities to receive the vaccine through your local health department or another health care provider. You are welcome to pursue those options as Mercyhealth is only receiving limited quantities of the vaccine, and it is important to get vaccinated.

Vaccination information:

Illinois: The State of Illinois has setup a COVID-19 vaccination website: coronavirus.illinois.gov. The website provides eligible residents with nearby vaccination sites, information on how to make an appointment to receive the vaccine, updates on the State's plan and eligibility, and answers to frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Winnebago County, Illinois: To register for the COVID-19 vaccine in Winnebago County, please visit wchd.org/covid-19.

Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS): Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has launched a weekly newsletter to provide updates to the public on COVID-19 response and vaccine rollout in Wisconsin. In addition to an update on vaccine eligibility and the number of vaccinations administered in Wisconsin, the weekly newsletter will include key updates from the previous week, as well as COVID-19 resources and links to where Wisconsinites can find more detailed information. To register, please visit dhs.wisconsin.gov.

Rock County, Wisconsin: In Rock County, if you are eligible for the vaccine but do not have a regular health care provider, you can visit the Rock County Public Health Department's website atco.rock.wi.us/publichealth and click on the Coronavirus link to fill out a request form.

Walworth County, Wisconsin: For information about COVID-19 vaccinations in Walworth County, please visit co.walworth.wi.us/896/COVID-19-Vaccine-Information.

Do I get to choose which vaccine I will receive?

Because of the limited quantity of vaccine received, you will not get to choose which brand of COVID-19 vaccine you will receive at this time. However, you will be given the same brand vaccine for your first and second dose.

How does the vaccine work?

The COVID-19 vaccines use messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA). It can most easily be described as instructions for how to make a protein or even just a piece of a protein. mRNA is not able to alter or modify a person's genetic makeup (DNA). The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept. This means the mRNA does not affect or interact with our DNA in any way. Instead, COVID-19 vaccines that use mRNA work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop protection (immunity) to disease.

Where will I go to get a vaccine?

When you make your COVID-19 vaccine appointment, you will be provided with a time and location for your vaccination.

What do I need to bring when I come to get a vaccine?

Please bring a photo ID and your insurance card. When receiving your second dose, bring the CDC vaccination record card you received at the first dose.

COVID-19 vaccines FAQ *continued*

What should I expect when I come for a vaccination?

Once you arrive at your vaccination site, you will register with a member of our team, sign a consent form, get vaccinated, and sit in the observation area for approximately 15 minutes. There may be periods of time you will stand or sit in line. We try to keep that to a minimum by hosting appointment-only vaccinations. We have chairs available throughout the process and require six-foot social distancing throughout the vaccination site. If you find you need something throughout the process, please ask a member of our team for assistance.

Will I have to sign a consent form if I'm vaccinated through Mercyhealth?

Yes. Depending on which Mercyhealth location you are vaccinated at, some health departments use their own tracking and recording for consent forms. Patients should be aware that they may sign a jurisdiction's consent form as well as a facility-specific consent form. This is to assure appropriate consent, chain of custody, and movement through phases is documented. For example, a county health department may require an electronic form signed while a health care organization may require paper documentation.

What is the cost of the vaccine?

Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, vaccine doses purchased with US taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. Health care providers may charge an administration fee for giving the shot; however, regardless of your insurance, patients will not be billed for these services. Mercyhealth will bill your insurance company for the administration of the vaccine. For uninsured patients, there is a federal program that Mercyhealth will provide the billing for reimbursement. Patients will not be responsible for any portion of this administrative cost.

I received another vaccine last week. Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine today?

The COVID-19 vaccines should be administered alone. No other vaccines, such as Shingles or Influenza, should be administered in the 14 days before or after the COVID-19 vaccine. There may be a situation in which COVID-19 vaccines would be administered within a shorter period. These situations should be discussed with your health care provider. The vaccinator may ask you to delay your COVID-19 vaccine if you recently received another vaccine.

I was recently ill with COVID-19. Can I receive the vaccine today?

Generally, yes. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that reinfection with COVID-19 is possible, you should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had a COVID-19 infection.

There are some situations in which you should delay receiving the COVID-19 vaccine:

- If you are currently ill or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 you should wait until you have recovered and are outside of the isolation period before receiving the COVID-19 vaccines.
- If you have received monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma therapy as part of treatment for COVID-19, you should wait at least 90 days following this therapy.
- If you are currently ill or in quarantine for exposure to someone with COVID-19, please defer your vaccination until you are out of your isolation or quarantine period.

I have a history of allergies. Can I get this vaccine?

Some serious allergic reactions to COVID-19 vaccines have occurred. Those with a history of severe allergic reactions to any vaccine or injectable medications may need to be observed for an extended window following vaccination or may not be eligible to receive vaccination at this time. Most allergic reactions, including those to many oral medications, foods, pets and other environmental allergies, are not a contraindication to receive the COVID-19 vaccines. Inform the vaccinator of any history of reactions to previous medications or vaccines.

I am pregnant. Should I get the vaccine?

In early clinical trials for various COVID-19 vaccines, only non-pregnant adults participated. However, clinical trials continue to expand those recruited to participate. Women who are pregnant, or who are nursing a child, weren't included in the studies. The groups recommended to receive the vaccines could change in the future. Women should engage in shared decision-making with their primary health care provider.

Does the vaccine cause infertility?

No data has been reported by the FDA or the manufacturer regarding infertility.

COVID-19 vaccines FAQ *continued*

Are there any serious reactions or side effects to the COVID-19 vaccine?

Most people do not have serious problems after being vaccinated. Individuals who receive the vaccine may experience some level of discomfort in the form of fever, injection site reaction, fatigue, headache or muscle aches. These side effects may be a signal that your immune system is doing exactly what it's supposed to do—working to build protection to disease.

Concern: My current medication makes me sick. I don't want to be any sicker.

It makes a lot of sense that you do not want to be feeling any sicker. Here is the latest information released by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) that is included in the Fact Sheet For Recipients and Caregivers issued by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and given to you when you receive the vaccine: Side effects that have been reported with the COVID-19 vaccine include injection site pain, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, fever, injection site swelling, injection site redness, nausea, feeling unwell, swollen lymph nodes. Talk to your health care provider if you need to discuss what you can do if you experience any of these effects.

Are there any medical conditions where there are contraindications?

The only published contraindication is to not administer a COVID-19 vaccine to individuals with a known history of a severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to any component of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Concern: The new vaccine hasn't undergone a lot of testing.

The technology and coordinated approach to COVID-19 vaccine development saved a significant amount of time in the production of these vaccines. The focus on safety data is reviewed by the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices. Their experts are responsible for reviewing that the safety of this vaccine is consistent with specific guidelines and predetermined safety standards for all vaccines that come to the market.

I received my first COVID-19 vaccine. When can I receive the next dose?

You should receive your second dose from the same manufacturer as your first dose. The second dose of the Pfizer vaccine should occur 21 days following the first dose, and the second dose of the Moderna vaccine should occur 28 days following the first dose.

How will I be notified when I need to come for a second dose?

When you schedule your first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, you will also schedule your second dose. Depending on the type of vaccine you receive, your follow-up appointment will either be 3 weeks later (Pfizer) or 4 weeks later (Moderna).

Can my spouse come with me and get their vaccine at the same time?

No, at this time COVID-19 vaccination is based on eligibility and by appointment only. We cannot accommodate walk ins.

Can someone be vaccinated in my place?

No, your COVID-19 vaccine appointment cannot be transferred to someone else.

Can someone accompany me to my vaccine appointment?

Yes, if you need assistance, someone may accompany you. Wheelchairs are available, but in limited quantity.

I need help scheduling my COVID-19 vaccine appointment. I don't understand MyChart.

You may contact Mercyhealth MyChart Support Monday-Friday, 8 am-5 pm, by calling (888) 996-9242 or emailing mychartsupport@mhemail.org.

Are walk-ins accepted if I am not able to register online?

No, at this time vaccinations are by appointment only. Mercyhealth will be reaching out to established patients who are eligible for the vaccine based on the information in their medical record. We will expand notification through other outreach methods (mail, phone and email) as our vaccine supply allows. At this time we cannot accommodate walk ins.

COVID-19 vaccines FAQ *continued*

How do I confirm that I set up my appointment correctly?

MyChart is the best way to validate your vaccination date and time. You can also call (888) 396-3729 to verify your appointment.

If I don't have MyChart, how and when will I receive notification to register for my vaccination appointment? Do I call to register?

We recommend you create a MyChart account. If you don't have a MyChart account, you can visit mychart.mercyhealthsystem.org/MyChart and create an account. We'll expand notification through other outreach methods (mail, phone and email) as our vaccine supply allows. Wait lists are not available at this time. Please continue to monitor your MyChart account and our website for further updates.

I need to cancel my COVID-19 vaccine appointment. What should I do?

You'll need to log in to MyChart. You should then see a box that says "View Details" for your vaccine appointment. From there, you can cancel or reschedule your appointment.

If there are no appointments available that work with my schedule, when will more dates/times be posted?

We are continually adding more appointments as we receive more vaccine. Please continue to monitor your MyChart account.

Will I need to get the COVID-19 vaccine every year?

Both this disease and the vaccine are new. At this time, we don't know how long protection lasts for those who get infected or those who are vaccinated. What we do know is that the COVID-19 vaccines currently approved require two doses of vaccine, separated by 21 days (Pfizer) and 28 days (Moderna). Because different COVID-19 vaccine products won't be interchangeable, a vaccine recipient's second dose must be from the same manufacturer as their first dose.

I have heard the term POD used. What is that?

A POD is a Point of Dispensing. The term is used by the CDC, local public health, and health care providers to describe a point at which mass vaccination (or dispensing) is occurring. The goal of a POD is to vaccinate as many people as possible with appropriate resources and an easy to follow one-way progression. Mercyhealth has PODs set up to provide vaccination, by appointment, to allow a safe environment for our patients, providers, and visitors to be vaccinated. If you make an appointment for one of our vaccination clinics, it will be in a POD layout.

I was contacted by my local health department to receive a vaccine also. Should I go there or Mercyhealth?

Both Wisconsin and Illinois have different processes for releasing vaccine. Each health department is responsible for assuring the vaccine is provided in an efficient and equitable mechanism. You may be contacted or see advertisements by Mercyhealth, a retail pharmacy, a local health department, or other provider. You may register at any location you wish to receive your vaccine. It is asked that you receive your first and second dose in the same location because of vaccine amounts and allocations. If Mercyhealth provided your first dose, we will be ready for your second dose. As the vaccine becomes more readily available there will be more options and availability for community members to receive it. We encourage you to get vaccinated wherever you choose.

How can I tell if I was contacted by a scammer?

We recognize that bad actors may try to take advantage of the public through vaccination. The vaccine is highly sought after. We do not recommend you provide your insurance information over the phone and you should never be asked for payment information over the phone for the COVID-19 vaccine. To check your eligibility for the vaccine, we recommend you log into your MyChart account or check with your local health department.

