



Basic Information About COVID-19 Vaccines

This information has been compiled based on information provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regarding the new COVID-19 Vaccine. This document should help obtain a basic understanding of the vaccine. For more detailed information, please check reputable national, state, and local resources.

1. Why should we consider taking the COVID-19 vaccine?

In addition to prevention tools such as wearing a mask, hand washing, maintaining six feet social distancing, and avoiding crowds, getting a vaccine is another means to stop the spread of the virus.

The currently available vaccines have shown to be effective in preventing COVID-19, may keep you from getting seriously ill even if you get infected and prevents you from spreading the virus to others, protecting the people around you - especially those who might get seriously ill if they were to get infected.

2. Are the vaccines safe?

The safety of the COVID vaccines is a high priority for the CDC (Centers for Disease control), FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) and ACIP (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices). The vaccines have been monitored through clinical trials prior to their approval and are subject to ongoing monitoring for safety even after approval. So far, two vaccines have been approved: the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, and Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine. Other vaccines are currently in clinical trials which may get approved in the future.

3. How many doses are required?

Both of the currently-authorized vaccines need **two** doses with the second dose taken 3 (Pfizer), or 4 (Moderna) weeks after the first dose. It is recommended to take the **same brand of vaccine for both doses**. The first shot helps the body recognize the virus and start building the immunity, and the second shot strengthens the immune response for better protection against COVID-19.

4. Other things to keep in mind:

- a. There is no cost to the recipient to get the vaccine. Vaccine providers can get the administration 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.
- b. You can get the vaccine even if you previously tested positive for COVID-19, as scientists are still studying the effectiveness of natural immunity. If you are currently infected or recovering from COVID, then you must wait until your isolation period is over before getting the vaccine. If you have



- previously tested positive for COVID-19, check with your healthcare provider before scheduling your vaccination.
- c. You may experience common side effects like: pain or redness on your arm, fever, chills, tiredness, headache, sore muscles, etc. Your side effects may last anywhere from 24 hours to a few days. Side effects are a sign that the vaccine is working. If these symptoms are severe, you should call your doctor. It is recommended to get the second shot even if you have side effects unless your vaccine provider or doctor advises against it for you.
 - d. Pregnant or breast-feeding individuals should talk to their physician before taking the vaccines.
 - e. People who have had allergic reactions to other vaccines should also talk to their physicians before taking the vaccine. If you are advised to take the vaccine, you may need to be monitored carefully.
 - f. If you are immunocompromised, have an auto-immune condition, or take immunosuppressive medications, please talk to your physician before taking the vaccine. Some individuals might not be able to take the vaccines, but can benefit from others taking the vaccine. You should continue using prevention tools like wearing a mask, washing your hands regularly, practicing six-foot social distancing, and avoiding crowds.
 - g. It is currently recommended that you continue using the prevention methods (mask-wearing, washing hands frequently, practicing social distancing and avoiding crowds) even after taking the vaccines.
5. The vaccine is being rolled out in phases in every state, including MI. MDHHS provides updates on vaccine availability based on information on vaccine effectiveness and its availability. Your local health department can provide the most relevant information pertinent to your agency.
 6. Seek to understand your employee and service participants' concerns and provide information they need in a way that they can understand – keeping a survivor centered, intersectional and trauma-informed lens.
 - a. Vaccine information should be provided to your service participants and they can make their own choice about whether or not to get the vaccine. Getting vaccinated should not be condition for receiving services.
 - b. For employees, agencies may set their own policy regarding the vaccine based on their existing human resource policies and the need to delivering services safely. This decision can also be based on what kind of services the employee is engaged in (for example: emergency shelter advocates versus Helpline advocates, remote versus in-person counseling, legal advocates, administrative staff etc.). Every agency may set these policies on their own.