

THE COVID-19 VACCINE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

South Carolina has strategically developed a COVID-19 Vaccine Plan that's centered on the fair and equitable distribution of COVID- vaccine across the state. South Carolina's plan has been approved by the federal government, and the plan is expected to change as additional information is available about COVID-19 vaccines. DHEC will continue to provide the most factual and current information about COVID-19 vaccine and its planned distribution within our state. This fact sheet is accurate as of Dec. 31 2020. Because information can change rapidly, visit scdhec.gov/vaxfacts for the most up-to-date vaccine information.

When will the vaccine be available?

On December 14, 2020, South Carolina received its first allocation of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Facilities received direct shipments from the federal government. States will continue to receive weekly shipments of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine from the federal government. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is being administered to phase 1a individuals.

On December 28, 2020, South Carolina received its first allocation of Moderna vaccine. The Moderna vaccine the state receives is dedicated to the vaccination of all long-term care facility residents and staff through the CDC's Long-Term Care Program. This is a federal program for vaccinating vulnerable long-term care facility residents and staff through a federal partnership with Walgreens and CVS pharmacies.

Which vaccines will be available first?

The FDA issued an Emergency Use Authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on December 11, 2020. South Carolina received its first allocation of this vaccine on December 14, 2020. The FDA issued an Emergency Use Authorization for the Moderna vaccine on December 18, 2020. South Carolina received its first allocation of this vaccine on December 28, 2020.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine a live vaccine?

There is no COVID-19 in vaccines. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines help your body make antibodies to a protein on the virus surface. This allows your immune system to attack the virus and fight off infection if you are exposed. You can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

The FDA is committed to science and the critical evaluation of all new vaccines for their safety and efficacy in an unbiased way before their authorization for use. No vaccine will be released until it has undergone rigorous scientific and clinical testing that all vaccines in development are held to. [Learn more about vaccine development in this presentation from the CDC.](#)

How can a safe vaccine be made so quickly?

Vaccine development typically takes many years, however, scientists had already begun research for coronavirus vaccines during previous outbreaks caused by related coronaviruses, such as SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome). That earlier research provided a head start for rapid development of vaccines to protect against infection with the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Any vaccine or medication can cause side effects. These are typically minor, such as a sore arm or low-grade fever, and go away within a few days. As with all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines are not approved until clinical trials have taken place that show they are both safe and effective. Safety is the top priority of any vaccine. Results from the first COVID-19 vaccines show no serious side effects.

Who can get the vaccine?

South Carolina is offering vaccine to individuals as outlined in the state's vaccine plan, which uses federal guidance from the CDC and recommendations from South Carolina's Vaccine Advisory Committee. As of December 2020, South Carolina is in phase 1a of the vaccination plan. The overarching goal of phase 1a is preventing deaths. Front-line medical workers and long-term care facility residents and staff are among those prioritized for Phase 1a vaccine distribution.

As additional vaccines are approved and vaccine supplies increase, COVID-19 vaccine will be available for everyone. COVID-19 vaccine supply is expected to increase substantially in 2021.

How will I know when I can get the vaccine?

DHEC and its partners have plans in development of notifying the public when and how the vaccine is available to them. This includes traditional forms of public notification – news release, website and social media updates – as well as public service announcements; print, radio and TV ads, community-level outreach, direct mailers and other forms of outreach to ensure South Carolinians know when it's their time to receive vaccine. Health care providers will also notify their patients.

Is there a website where I can register to get on the list to receive vaccine?

You do not need to register on a list. You'll know when the vaccine is available to you through various means, including public information campaigns, the media, and your personal health care doctors. Please be wary of scams – no one will ever ask you for personal information in order for you to join a waiting list or registry for vaccine. Contact local authorities if you receive this type of communication.

How much will it cost to get vaccinated?

The federal government will cover the cost of the vaccine. There will be no out-of-pocket costs for the vaccine. Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers will cover the cost of vaccine administration. It is possible that health care providers may charge an office visit fee, or a fee to administer the vaccine. Administrative costs for vaccine for the uninsured will be covered by Health Resources and Services Administration.

Will more than one dose of COVID-19 vaccine be required?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine requires two doses separated by 21 days. The Moderna vaccine requires two doses separated by 28 days. The different vaccine products will not be interchangeable; the two doses must be completed with the same vaccine product.

Future vaccines may require a single dose. Information will be provided as additional COVID-19 vaccines successfully complete development and are authorized for use.

How will I know when to get my second dose?

After receiving your first shot, everyone will receive a paper immunization record that will be completed at the time of vaccination. It will include the vaccine you received, date and location, and date when your next shot is needed. Individuals will be reminded when it's time to receive their second shot.

The vaccine you receive and when you need the second dose is confidential health information that is carefully managed to protect your privacy.

Do I need to wear a mask and physically distance from others after being vaccinated?

Yes. Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask and staying at least 6 feet away from others, help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others.